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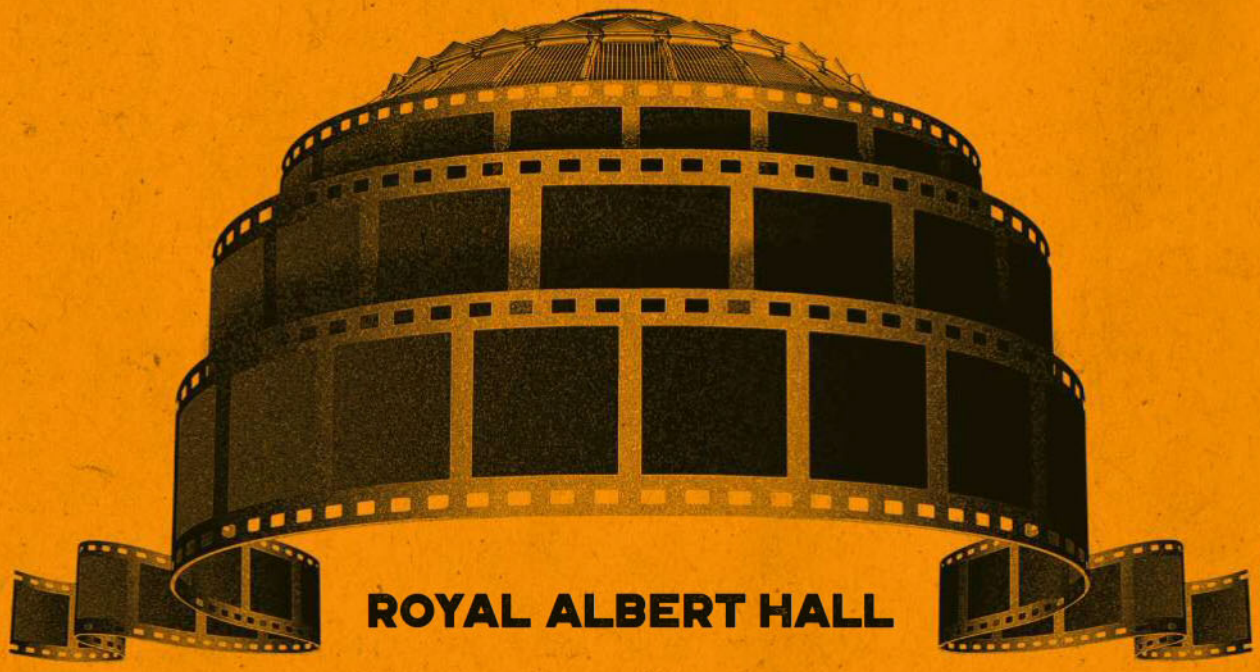
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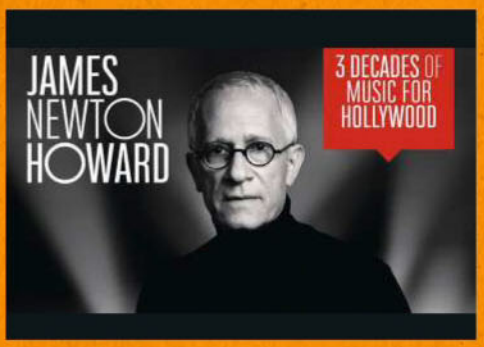


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THIS MONTH AT EMPIRE

WHEN WE LAST saw Luke Skywalker, he was brooding atop a rock; in exile from the world, from the galaxy. Hey, I'm no psychologist, but some may say *from himself*. But what he didn't bank on (but we did) was plucky, resourceful, rad-as-hell Rey, who made it clear in the final moments of *The Force Awakens* — lightsaber in outstretched, pleading hand — that she was grimly determined to pull Luke back into the heart of the Resistance. She won't have an easy job of it, we fear, after everything we've seen and heard in the months since ("I only know one truth. It's time for the Jedi to end." *Nooooo!*). It's certainly a stomach-knotting premise for *The Last Jedi*: what becomes of the hope and heart of the *Star Wars* universe if Luke Skywalker is lost?

It's a sitting-bolt-upright-in-bed-at-4am thought, so there was only one thing for it: we sent James Dyer, *Empire*'s resident *Star Wars* superfan/psychopath, to talk to the man himself, Mark Hamill, and director Rian Johnson. What they shared with him — and we're sharing with you — made us even more anxious and excited for the film hitting cinemas in December. It's a good job we're kind of into being anxious and excited (pretty much all of the time). And here's what else you should be anxcited about in this month's *Empire*...

We speak to Darren Aronofsky and Jennifer Lawrence about the full-crazy horror movie *mother!*, go on the set of David Fincher's new serial-killer thriller *MINDHUNTER*, hang out with Steve Buscemi, take a first look at comedy *The Death Of Stalin* and talk to Matthew Modine and Vincent D'Onofrio about *Full Metal Jacket* some 30 years on. It's a fairly out-there issue. And we couldn't be prouder of it.

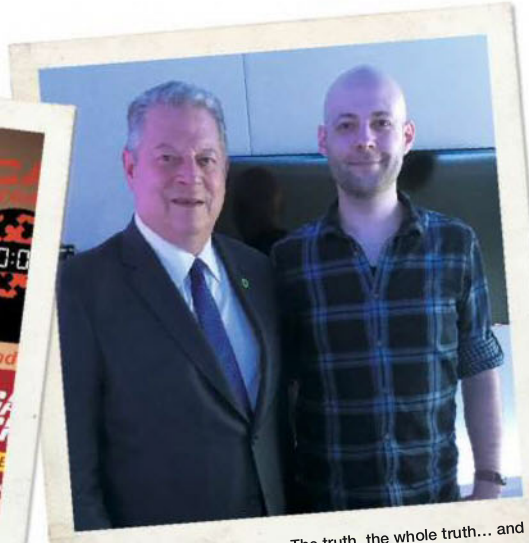
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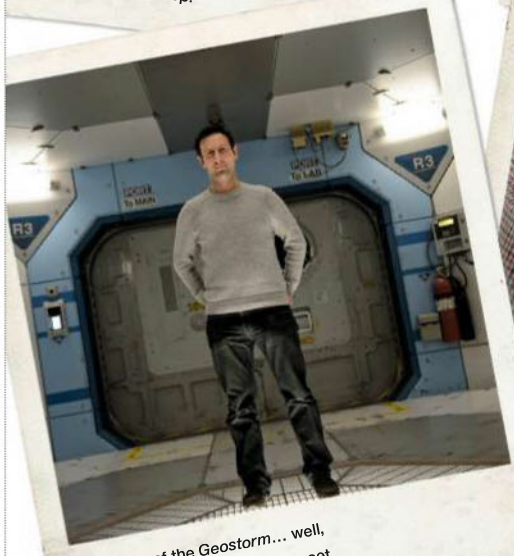
TERRI WHITE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Team *Empire* winning the *Logan Lucky* Escape Room in 55 minutes and 27 seconds, whoop!



The truth, the whole truth... and *An Inconvenient Sequel* too. Al Gore meets James Dyer for the *Empire* podcast.



In the eye of the Geostorm... well, nearly. It's Nick de Semlyen on set.



Illustrator Bill McConkey conjures Supreme Leader Snoke for our *Last Jedi* feature.



Picture this: Stanley Tucci joins Phil de Semlyen to chat about *Final Portrait* for the *Empire* podcast.



John Nugent meets Will Poulter to discuss '67 civil rights drama *Detroit*.

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID MAHONEY

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SPINELINE ANSWERS ISSUE 340: THOR: "GREAT! YOU WASTED ALL MY CLEARASIL ON ANOTHER PICTURE OF THOR?" IS FROM *ADVENTURES IN BABYSITTING*. HULK: "SO NOW WE WORK FOR THE HULK? THAT'S WHAT WE'RE DOING?" IS FROM *FAST & FURIOUS 6*. SUBS: "DO YOU WANT ME TO DRESS UP AS THOR? I'LL DRESS UP LIKE THOR" IS FROM *THE 40-YEAR-OLD VIRGIN*


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TALK TO US

COMMENT OF THE MONTH

HOW DEEP IS YOUR LOVE?



I thoroughly enjoyed your James Cameron interview in the latest issue and was eagerly awaiting what was going to be revealed about *The Abyss* — in my opinion Cameron's best movie and one of my all-time favourites. Soon after DVD was invented *The Abyss* was released in a shockingly crummy non-anamorphic version. I waited patiently for Fox to get up to speed and release a better version, but it never happened, and to this day this masterpiece is yet to be released in high definition. So you can imagine my disappointment and downright outrage when the aforementioned interview said nothing about a forthcoming Blu-ray release of *The Abyss*. A golden opportunity sorely missed!

SUNE SVANEKIER, VIA EMAIL

Sune, we can't give you an HD pseudopod. But for your passion and commitment to all things Abyss, *have a year's free Picturehouse Membership.*

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ON THE OBI-WAN MOVIE:

I'D LIKE TO SEE THE FORCE-GHOST STUFF EXPLORED HERE, AS IT WAS JUST A THROWAWAY LINE IN *ROTS*. THEY CAN BRING LIAM NEESON BACK WHILE THEY'RE AT IT.

PAUL HAMILTON

READY PLAYER HUM

If you break the *Ready Player One* trailer music down to its basic melody (hum it, trust me), it becomes *Pure Imagination* as sung by Gene Wilder's Willy Wonka. Great nod to author Ernest Cline's original themes and influences, eh?

JAIME NASH, VIA EMAIL

CRANSTON PICKLE

I liked the article on Bryan Cranston last issue. However, one character is missing: Tim Whatley, the "dentist to the stars" from *Seinfeld*. He may have only been in a few episodes but he made a lasting impression.

BEN, CHESHUNT

HEY @EMPIREMAGAZINE WHY IS STEVEN SEAGAL'S HAIR MATTE-BLACK? IT REFLECTS NO LIGHT, HAS NO LUSTRE. I'M PERPLEXED!

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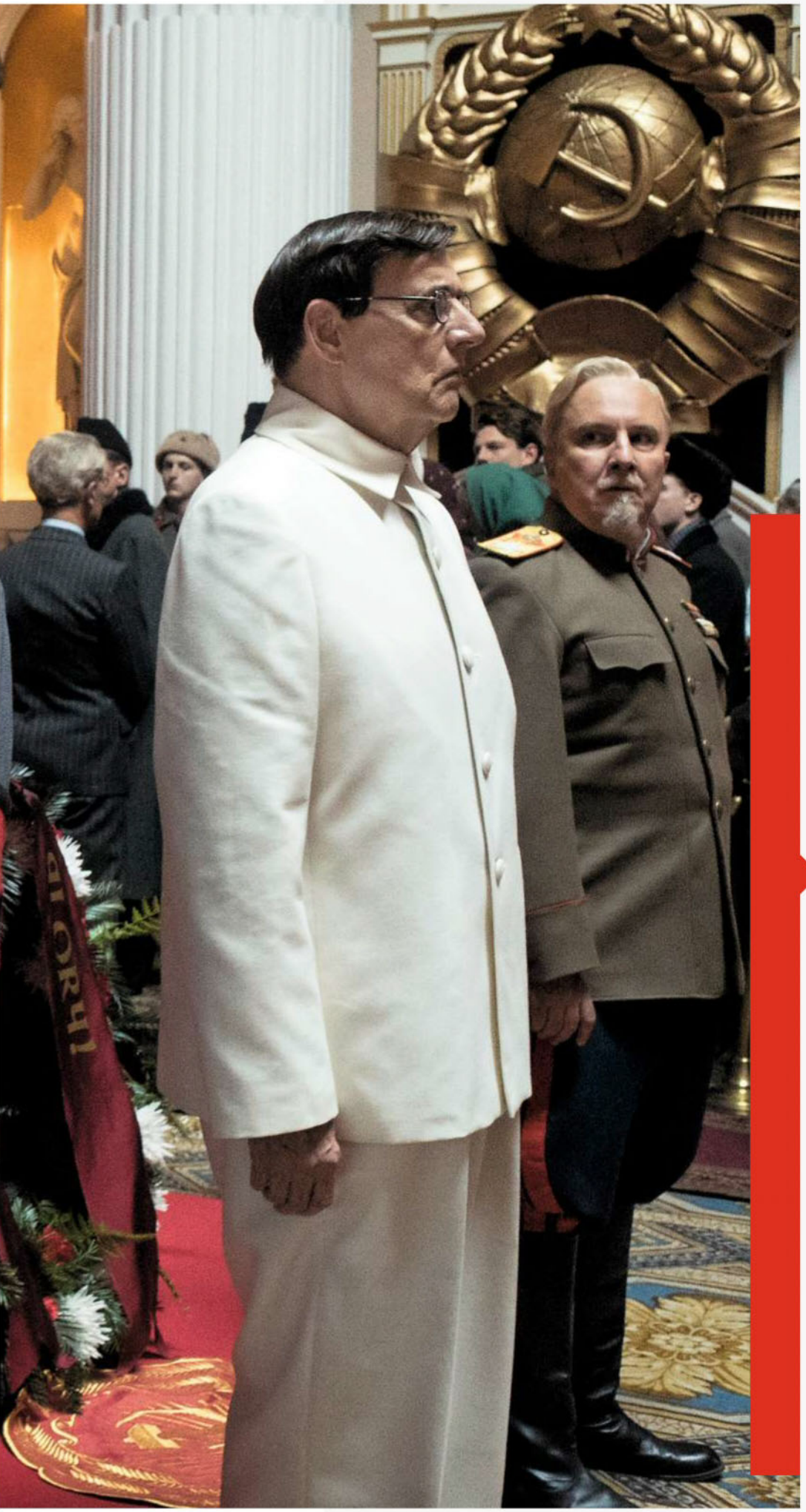

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FIRST LOOK

THE DEATH OF STALIN

OUT **20 OCTOBER**

THE LATE DICTATOR

Bullets, betrayals, belly laughs. Director Armando Iannucci's new satire has a very dark heart

WORDS **WILL LAWRENCE**

HE'S TAKEN ON Whitehall and tackled the White House, and now it's the Kremlin's turn. *In The Loop*'s Armando Iannucci, the creator of *The Thick Of It* and *Veep*, is returning to the big screen with *The Death Of Stalin*. A blackly comic satire, it sifts through the political machinations that unfolded immediately after the Soviet dictator popped his murderous clogs in 1953.

Loosely based on fact, the story takes Fabien Nury's French graphic novel of the same name as its starting point. But Iannucci's script — and direction — ramps up the laughs even as the bodies amass. Potential successors to Stalin, Khrushchev (Steve Buscemi), Beria (Simon Russell Beale) and Malenkov (Jeffrey Tambor), all jockey for position, each out-scheming the others.

"We've been very careful not to trivialise history," says producer Kevin Loader. "But that doesn't mean the politics of succession don't have farcical elements." As history attests, it's Khrushchev who emerges triumphant, once war hero Marshal Zhukov directs his power against Beria. Jason Isaacs plays the medal-festooned soldier. "All the politicians are terrified of each other, but Zhukov's not scared of anybody," he stresses. "My Zhukov is hard as nails."

As Isaacs relates, *The Death Of Stalin* combines "the real and the hilarious" in a telling that might not be *entirely* historically accurate. That's Iannucci's trademark, and he looks set for another sweary showstopper.







ON-SET EXCLUSIVE

THE SNOWMAN

OUT 13 OCTOBER

SLAY FROSTY

With *The Snowman*, director Tomas Alfredson seeks to launch a stylish new crime franchise

WORDS **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**

MICHAEL FASSBENDER IS singing a few bars of *Walking In The Air* on *The Snowman*'s Oslo set. This croaky nostalgia has been sparked by *Empire*'s mention of Raymond Briggs' '80s animation which shares a name, but absolutely nothing else, with his new thriller. There'll be snowmen, but they'll be left by a serial killer at murder scenes. Fassbender's cop, Harry Hole, must solve the case before the leads, well, melt.

Originally a Martin Scorsese project set in Detroit and Chicago, *The Snowman* was entrusted to *Let The Right One In*'s Tomas Alfredson after Scorsese passed in 2013. Bringing Hole, author Jo Nesbø's pin-sharp but troubled detective, back to Norway has opened plenty of doors to the production. It's February and the shoot has moved from the ice-capped cliffs of Telemark to Oslo's waterfront. Tonight they're at the imposing red-brick City Hall, one of those open doors. "We're not *The Revenant* yet," jokes producer Robyn Slovo, as black Mercedes sweep through the slush and discharge VIPs for a bash hosted by J.K. Simmons' media mogul, Arve Støp.

It's in this Gotham-y world that Fassbender's rumpled 'tec teams with talented young cop Katrine Bratt (Rebecca Ferguson). The political pressure to find the killer is high; Hole is vulnerable, destructible even. "These characters often seem almost bulletproof," Fassbender notes, "but he comes out bottom in a lot of tussles. He's got a lot of flaws. He's enigmatic."

The director and his star almost worked together on *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, and they've hit it off second time around. "I watch him as closely as I can; he's an original, an artist," says Fassbender of Alfredson. On set, cast and crew queue up to extol their director's eye for snappy visuals. "There's nothing mundane about anything Tomas does," says Slovo. "He thinks visually."

Nesbø's 11 Harry Hole books have sold 30 million copies worldwide, a fanbase the filmmakers hope will fuel an entire franchise. As snowmen go, that's a pretty big carrot.





Clockwise from above: Michael Fassbender as Jo Nesbø's 30 million-selling detective Harry Hole; With police partner Katrine Bratt (Rebecca Ferguson); Bracing the Norwegian elements; Bratt faces flashy media mogul Arve Støp (J.K. Simmons).

THE DEBATE

IS DANIEL CRAIG RIGHT TO COME BACK AS JAMES BOND?

The actor is officially returning for Bond 25, but should we be glad he's taking that licence to kill for one last spin?



ILLUSTRATIONS **DAVID MAHONEY**



YES

CHRIS HEWITT

SO, THE WORST-kept secret in movies is out. Daniel Craig is back as Bond for a fifth and, it seems, final time with Bond 25 (a name I'd be delighted if they kept, if only to imagine Adele singing, "Bond Twenty-*Fiiiiiiiiive*!" at the Oscars).

From production company Eon's point of view, keeping Craig on the team makes sense. As with *Skyfall* and the 50th anniversary, the 25th Bond will be kind of a big deal, and breaking in a new 007 might be more hassle than it's worth.

There could be any number of reasons behind Craig's decision to stick around. It might be the notion of becoming the longest-serving Bond when the film is released in 2019, pipping Sir Roger Moore by days. And he doubtless received an offer with lots of zeroes (and, I hope, a 007 after the decimal point). But the reason he's given is the same reason I'm happy — excited, even — to see him return. "I want to go out on a high note," he said, an acknowledgement that *Spectre* wasn't the victory march he'd hoped for. It starts strongly, but the second Christoph Waltz shows up, it monologues itself into a coma.

And that's just it. No Bond actor has received the glorious ride into the sunset they deserve. Sean Connery's last film was *Diamonds Are Forever*, a performance so phoned-in Cubby Broccoli should have refused to accept the charges. Many love *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, but it's George Lazenby's only Bond film. Roger Moore went out creaking with *A View To A Kill*. Pierce Brosnan finished with *Die Another Day*, the worst of all Bonds. Only Timothy Dalton passes the quality test with the underrated *Licence To Kill*, and he didn't receive a send-off as nobody knew it would be his last.

So Craig deserves one last chance to ensure future conversations about the best Bond don't become, "Daniel Craig was good, but..." His hit rate as Bond is 50 per cent, with two crackers and two stinkers. Bond 25 could make it 60 per cent, commendable for any franchise, and a high note worthy of Adele. But to do so, Craig — like Dalton, an Actor first, Movie Star second, who has highfalutin ideas about turning Bond into an actual character — needs to forget all that, and have fun. Good, old-fashioned, keeping-the-British-end-up fun. If his Bond goes out with a smile, there's a chance the rest of us will follow.



NO

JONATHAN PILE

THE MOST BAFFLING element of Daniel Craig's announcement on Stephen Colbert's *The Late Show* — that he will be returning as Bond — wasn't that it had taken so long coming, or why



ALAMY

Daniel Craig raised the roof in *Skyfall*.



he'd changed his mind after he'd previously said he'd rather slash his wrists than play 007 again — it was the whoops and cheers from the studio audience. Is this *really* good news?

It's understandable that Craig would want to return (and it's not for the vast sums of money). He said it himself: he'd like to "go out on a high". With the benefit of distance, it's easier to see *Spectre* for what it was — the weakest film of the Craig era, a bit like *Quantum Of Solace*, only an hour longer. And despite the finale seeming like it was written with a view to killing off that iteration of the character, you can understand why he suddenly wants another crack at it.

But when Craig took on the role, part of the appeal was his youth. We hadn't had a Bond under 40 years old since George Lazenby, and his physicality enabled him to take the character where no previous Bond could go. Watch the opening of *Casino Royale* again and imagine even Sean Connery pulling it off. But Craig will be 51 by the time the movie comes out, assuming a 2019 release. In the Eon films, only Roger Moore was older when he played Bond. Craig will surely do his training regime and look mighty fine should he be required to smoulder in a pair of blue trunks, but 13 years on, that same raw athleticism won't be there. And those crane chases can be hellish on the knees.

Much of *Casino Royale*'s success came from how fresh and exciting it was, a Bond rebirth. Craig has been a fine 007 but it can't last forever, and with *Spectre* it felt like his time had come to a natural end. Except, now it hasn't. Compare it with *Doctor Who*, another long-running series that regularly recasts it main character. Peter Capaldi is a popular Doctor — dark but comedic, with an unpredictable streak — but he decided not to outstay his welcome. Just look at the excitement generated by the news that Jodie Whittaker would be taking over the part.

That could be Bond right now. We could be debating what a new actor would bring to the role, and in what direction their casting suggested the franchise was being taken. Instead, that will have to wait. Daniel Craig will return in Bond 25. A safe bet, but hardly a thrilling one. It really was time to say, "Never again."

FIFTIES SHADED DARKER

Here: The American Dream is a living nightmare for Margaret (Julianne Moore) and Gardner (Matt Damon). **Below:** Gardner makes an absurd getaway.

Something is rotten in the state of *Suburbicon*. Writer-director George Clooney reveals all

WORDS **IAN FREER**

IT'S THREE YEARS since George Clooney last sat in a director's chair. Following 2014's *The Monuments Men*, his new project stems partly from his own obsessions and partly from an old Joel and Ethan Coen script called *Suburbicon*.

"I'd been writing a script about [1957 documentary] *Crisis In Levittown.* I wanted to talk about building walls and scapegoating minorities," he says. "Themes that sadly never lose their relevance. At the same time, I pulled out a 1999 version of *Suburbicon* and thought the two stories were perfect to put together."

In splicing the two scripts with creative partner Grant Heslov — "I write long hand. Grant does the typing, thank God" — Clooney's tale peers into the idyllic American communities of 1959. If the dark side beyond white picket fences sounds very David Lynch, Clooney is drawing his inspiration directly from the period. In particular, the work of '50s German filmmaker Douglas Sirk, whose melodramas explored the manicured lawns and apple-pie façade of suburban life, became a touchstone.

"Specifically we looked at *Written On The Wind*," says Clooney about Sirk's 1956 classic. "We wanted to take the picture of what we think of the 1950s and put it in perspective. It all seemed so much simpler then. Of course, it was only simpler if you were a straight white man. Everyone else had a pretty tough time."



In *Suburbicon* Clooney puts a 'straight white man' through the mill. Matt Damon is Gardner Lodge, a husband and father whose life is turned upside down when he becomes the victim of a home invasion, while Oscar Isaac, in a role initially mooted for Clooney, plays an investigator with his suspicions around Lodge.

"Matt's character is a man who hates his life and does something really stupid to try to fix it," explains Clooney. "Every thing he does leads him deeper into chaos. And Gardner Lodge is not the guy you want around in times of chaos."

Within the darkness, Clooney has indulged himself at least one moment of absurdity: the hilarious sight of Damon as Lodge pedalling away from a raging fire, on possibly the world's smallest bicycle. "I rode around on that bike for hours myself just to make sure it was doable." admits Clooney. "Matt showed us all of his Jason Bourne skills in riding that little bike."

If all goes to plan, 'The Lodge Supremacy' may well be on the cards.

***SUBURBICON* IS IN CINEMAS FROM 24 NOVEMBER**

NEW MUTANTS

Lock up your unicorns: Deadpool is back, and he's got some new friends

WORDS **HELEN O'HARA**

HE'S MAD, BAD and dangerous to know but, like Lord Byron, Deadpool has cool friends. Heavily scarred mutant Cable is appearing in *Deadpool 2*, a second Marvel turn for Josh Brolin to go with Thanos. Cable's timey-wimey backstory will *not* be fully explained here, but essentially he's Jean Grey and Cyclops' son. Nathan 'Cable' Summer was born in an alternate future where mutants are hunted, and he's had one eye and arm replaced with Terminator-looking cybernetics. He's strong, uncanny and deadly serious.

But there's another key, new flavour: Domino, played by Zazie Beetz (*Atlanta*). She's a gifted markswoman with the mutant power to twist probability in her favour. In the comics her relationships with Deadpool and Cable haven't always run harmoniously. In one story, a shapeshifter called Copycat (real name: Vanessa. Could Morena Baccarin's character have mutant powers?) posed as Domino and tried to kill Cable. Things then got fractious between the real Domino and Deadpool when he sprung her from captivity and she immediately shot him. Another run saw her help Cable take down a dictator, only for him to try to install himself in the dead politician's place. Let's call it a love-hate relationship.

The chances are *Deadpool 2* will lift no more than elements from those stories, but the contrast between the manic Deadpool, the "grumpy uncle from the future" (as Reynolds puts it) Cable and the mercurial Domino feels exciting. Just as long as they don't let too much backstory get in the way of the epic squabbling.





Top to bottom: Gerard Butler as satellite designer Jake; "What happens if I press this button?"; Oops, it's a space station-triggered tsunami.

BROLLIES UP

The lowdown on weather epic *Geostorm*, the year's most drainbusting blockbuster

WORDS **NICK DE SEMLYEN**

IT'S *TWISTER* WITH a twist. It's *Hard Rain* with harder rain. It's *2012* multiplied by *300*. Whether you're ready or not, *Geostorm* is blowing in like a freak cyclone, and it's shaping up to be the most preposterous, over-the-top action movie of the year.

The man originally responsible for this mega-budget mash-up is Dean Devlin, the producer of apocalyptic blockbusters such as *Independence Day*, *The Day After Tomorrow* and, yes, *2012*, who was hired by Warner Bros. to make his directing debut with *Geostorm*. Together with writing partner Paul Guyot, he sketched out the story, then threw an all-you-can-sleet buffet of meteorological madness at it, including 14,000 tornados hurtling through Mumbai, a monstrous flash-freeze in Afghanistan and a hailstorm in Tokyo. "There's a lot of spectacle," Devlin promised *Empire* during the shoot back in early 2015. "But I'm going for the cheer factor too. Event [movies] are like a rock concert."

Unexpectedly, though, the plug has since been pulled. Late last year a behind-the-scenes hurricane hit *Geostorm*, with Devlin departing the project and director Danny Cannon (*Judge Dredd*) and producer Jerry Bruckheimer being summoned to oversee extensive reshoots. It didn't bode well, and the early trailers have lurched tonally from gritty foreboding to cheesy comedy, but one should never underestimate a film that features 3,000 firenados.





According to its star, those tonal shifts are part of its joy. "You have a disaster movie, a space movie, a romantic movie, a political thriller," reels off Gerard Butler, "and it's kind of a comedy as well." Sure enough, the plot zigzags between genres like a Netflix user with ADD. Butler is a satellite designer named Jake, who is rocketed into outer space to investigate rum doings aboard an international space station. Said space station was set up to reverse climate change on Earth, but it's creating natural disasters instead, building up to a bona fide globe-crusher. And if that wasn't enough, Jake's brother Max (Jim Sturgess) is in the White House, uncovering a conspiracy to kill the President. "I play a cheeky chappy in a spacesuit," explains Butler, "and I got to do some of the coolest shit I've ever done." All being well, all that production brouhaha will just end up being a geostorm in a geoteacup.

***GEOSTORM* IS IN CINEMAS FROM 20 OCTOBER**





FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE

TOMB RAIDER

OUT **16 MARCH 2018**

TALE FROM THE CRYPT

Alicia Vikander tackles a Lara Croft origins story

WORDS **JONATHAN PILE**

IT WASN'T THE script or even the director that drew Alicia Vikander to her latest film — it was a video game. "I was intrigued," she remembers of the moment she first saw 2013's retooled *Tomb Raider*. "It looked very different from the [*Tomb Raider*] games I played growing up. I wanted to find out what it was."

For the first time on screen, we'll meet Lara Croft *before* she gets into the whole crypt exploration business. The new film is based on that 2013 game, but when we meet Lara she's a cycle courier in London. And it's not some priceless lost artefact that sets her off on her journey, but a quest to find her missing father. Then she's marooned on a mystical, largely hostile island, where she must learn to defend herself — or end up in a tomb of her own.

"I knew it would be tough," admits Vikander of the role. However, it wasn't the gruelling physical requirements that spooked her, but her on-screen predecessor. "Angelina [Jolie] made Lara Croft into such an icon, and everyone thinks of her. Even *I* saw her face when I thought about the character."

But memories of previous Laras — from Jolie to the game's Rhona Mitra — should be banished. More character-led, this *Tomb Raider* promises to be a very different beast. "We asked, 'What are the famous traits of this person?'" recalls Vikander. "'How can we demonstrate them in the story, but make her feel like a young woman in 2018?'" Albeit a modern young woman who plunders magical artefacts for a living.



BRICKS OF FURY

The co-director of *The Lego Ninjago Movie*, Charlie Bean, talks through his posse of tiny heroes

WORDS **OLLY RICHARDS**

THE LEGO NINJAGO Movie tells the story of Lloyd (voiced by Dave Franco), a boy whose evil despot dad, Lord Garmadon (Justin Theroux), is a source of great embarrassment. With the city of Ninjago under threat (Dad again), Lloyd finds friendship with a group of teen ninjas. Not only does *Ninjago* include Lego fight scenes choreographed by Jackie Chan (who voices the group's mentor, Master Wu), it also has a stellar voice cast of comic actors. Co-director Charlie Bean introduces his six little ninjas.

1 _ KAI (MICHAEL PEÑA)

"Peña is so funny. Kai is the Fire Ninja and his sister, Nya, is the Water Ninja. He has this big mech — they all have giant vehicles — with flamethrowers for hands. Accordingly, he's kind of a hothead. Michael makes that super-funny. We couldn't do a lot of recording sessions with everyone together, but we'd put Abbi Jacobson [Nya] and Michael together and just throw things at them. They were amazing."

2 _ NYA (ABBI JACOBSON)

"I'm such a huge fan of *Broad City* [which Jacobson writes and stars in]. I think it's the very top of what's happening in comedy. Our cast are all writers, which means they're great at improvising. Nya is an extremely skilled and powerful ninja who has the difficulty of being



the one girl in the group. She's one of my favourite characters in the movie."

3 _ COLE (FRED ARMISEN)

"Cole is the Earth Ninja, he's grounded and mellow. He's a music fan who drives a mech around that's rigged up with giant subwoofers and turntables, and he can fire sonic blasts. We looked at what [Fred Armisen] did on *Portlandia* or *Saturday Night Live,* where he can pull new characters out constantly. The man can be anyone."

4 _ ZANE (ZACH WOODS)

"Zane is a robot. He's a bit of a Pinocchio. He just wants to be a regular teen, but he's very clearly not. He's the Ice Ninja and he drives this incredible tank that shoots ice bullets. I knew Zach Woods from *The Office* and *Silicon Valley*. He has the most unbelievable brain. Michael Peña turned to me in the recording booth with his jaw dropped at the stuff Zach was coming up with on the fly."

5 _ JAY (KUMAIL NANJIANI)

"I watched Kumail do stand-up comedy a lot in LA and he's a brilliant comic. With all these actors we were looking for voices that would stand out from each other, which I think we really have here. Jay is the Lightning Ninja and he has kind of a nervous personality, which makes him really talkative. That really works with Kumail's comic personality. He's such a funny character."

6 _ LLOYD (DAVE FRANCO)

"Lloyd is the leader of the ninjas. He's also the son of Lord Garmadon, who's heck bent on destroying the city — and everybody knows it. However, nobody knows he's the Green Ninja [aka The Chosen One], trying to save them all, so school is pretty awkward. We chose Dave Franco because, while he's such a sweet guy, there's also a bit of an edge to his voice. He's like Ralph Macchio from *Karate Kid* instead of some Disney hero."



SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT

How director Dee Rees braved mud and mozzies to bring Mississippi's grim past to life

WORDS **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**

THINGS WENT SOUTH in every sense on Dee Rees' new Mississippi-set drama, *Mudbound*. "It was *absolutely* muddy," laughs the director of a shoot in the sweltering boondocks outside New Orleans. "Between the waders, the mosquitos and the heat, we were always uncomfortable. One of the producers sent me a picture from the set where I'm in ripped jeans and a bandana, and I wondered how we survived it."

The film's title, of course, isn't just a description of the on-set conditions. Named after the Hillary Jordan novel on which it's based, the "mudbound" metaphor refers to a bleak era in post-World War II Southern life. Two families — one black and one white — find themselves mired in racial inequality, eking out lives, and love affairs, in an unforgiving landscape. The landowning McAllans (Carey Mulligan, Garrett Hedlund and Jason Clarke) and the sharecropping Jackson clan (Jason Mitchell, Rob Morgan and Mary J Blige) form the heart of Rees' third feature (her first, *Pariah*, earned raves in 2011). It is, she says, a "big story" that parallels conflicts at home with Nazi-battling abroad. "You think it's a love story, then a war story or a [story] about Jim Crow," says Rees, "but it's about all those things."



Above: Jamie (Garrett Hedlund) and Ronsel (Jason Mitchell) forge an uneasy friendship. **Left:** Landowners Henry McAllan (Jason Clarke) and Laura McAllan (Carey Mulligan).

Nonetheless, the spectre of slavery and segregation hangs over the story like the humid Southern fug. The dialogue is peppered with racist epithets, and simmering tensions explode into a fierce Ku Klux Klan lynching scene that took two days to film and tested its director's skills in unusual ways. "The white actors needed to feel safe saying these lines," she notes. "I said to my head Klan guy, 'You're going to say horrible things and I want you to lean into it.'"

Mudbound's Mississippi scenes were shot in Louisiana (the war scenes were shot in Budapest and on a Long Island soundstage) because authentic locations were easier to come by there — right down to the original, if now leaky sharecropper cabins. "Every slave movie now gets shot in New Orleans, because they kept all that stuff," Rees explains. "Mississippi didn't preserve its history in that way."

The pay-off for this mix of storytelling ambition and painstaking authenticity came when Netflix paid $12.5 million for *Mudbound* at Sundance in January. It is, as Rees remembers, a breakout success several hundred mosquito bites in the making. "If there was any Zika virus on location," she laughs, "I have it."

***MUDBOUND* IS ON NETFLIX FROM 17 NOVEMBER**

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ON-SET EXCLUSIVE

GOODBYE CHRISTOPHER ROBIN

OUT **29 SEPTEMBER**

THE COLOUR OF HONEY

Domhnall Gleeson's take on Winnie the Pooh's creator is not child's play

WORDS **IAN FREER**

23 SEPTEMBER 2016 is a landmark day on *Goodbye Christopher Robin*, a tightly focused biopic of Winnie the Pooh creator A.A. Milne. *Empire* is in the Ashdown Forest in East Sussex on the actual bridge where Poohsticks, the game played by Pooh and friends, was invented (a stone noting the fact has been discreetly covered up). Tourists from Canada, Scotland and Japan wait to pass as Domhnall Gleeson as A(lan) A(lexander) Milne and nine-year-old Will Tilston as his son Christopher Robin drop sticks, then leg it to the other side of the bridge to see whose emerges first. A props man stands in the water to recycle sticks.

"This is the point in the film where Alan and Christopher Robin are getting to know one another," says Gleeson, retaining a pitch-perfect upper-class English accent. "Alan has been on a tough journey and, all of a sudden, the innocence of the boy and childhood is just rubbing off on him. It's giving him a new lease of life."

This "tough journey" is *Goodbye Christopher Robin*'s dramatic hook. As written by Frank Cottrell-Boyce, the creation of Pooh, Piglet and co is informed by Milne's struggles with post-World War I demons, his relationship with wife Daphne (Margot Robbie) and the tensions caused when Christopher Robin becomes the prototype child celebrity. "It's not a sickly sweet film," says director Simon Curtis. "There's pain and distress as well."

Despite being near universally popular, Gleeson didn't grow up on Pooh (so to speak), which he thinks is an advantage. "Having a bit of a cold eye is good because you warm up to the man every day," he says. "We shouldn't have to know about Winnie the Pooh for it to necessarily mean something. For me it's about a father and a son, and a man struggling with PTSD."

With that, the actor returns to his sticks. And for a glorious moment, the line between innocent childhood and tormented adulthood is blurred.





Clockwise from above: Will Tilston as Christopher Robin, clutching the soon-to-be legendary bear; Kelly Macdonald plays nanny Olive; Director Simon Curtis (right) joins Tilston and Domhnall Gleeson (as A.A. Milne) on the Poohsticks bridge in the Ashdown Forest; Margot Robbie completes the family as Milne's wife, Daphne.

THE INTRO

***Empire* showcases tomorrow's stars today**

ALI FAZAL

WORDS **DAN JOLIN** PORTRAIT **VIBHOR YADAV**

AGE __ 30

PLAYS __ Abdul Karim in Stephen Frears' based-on-fact period drama *Victoria & Abdul*. Karim was an Indian clerk who befriended Queen Victoria (Judi Dench — again) and controversially became her teacher, or 'Munshi'. "It was his confidence and innocence that really attracted me," says Fazal.

BACKSTORY __ "I broke my arm during a basketball match at boarding school and thought my life was over. Then a friend said, 'Your English isn't bad. They're putting on *The Tempest* and there's a cute girl playing Miranda. Why don't you try out?' That was the beginning of this disease."

EARLY ROLES __ "I started in Bollywood with a cameo in a movie called *3 Idiots* [2009], which was a hit. I did have a stint on *Fast & Furious* [as Safar in *Furious 7*], but it was a come-and-go thing."

THE BIG BREAK __ "It was brave of them to come to India to [cast] someone. But it was a long, traumatising process. I mean, I love him to death now — he's my guru — but during my audition Stephen Frears had the Delhi belly. He was sprawled across this couch barely looking at me [*laughs*]. But I got the part a few weeks later."

HOBBIES __ "I still love playing basketball, but I also like to keep up with current affairs and political stuff — considering what's happening in the world today and especially in my country."

ACTING HEROES __ "I grew up with Brando. He's someone I almost think I might have hallucinated."

NEXT UP __ "There's something I might be doing with Amazon, but I'm not allowed to say much on that, and I have two films lined up in India. As for *Fast & Furious*, you never know. I might return..."

***VICTORIA & ABDUL* IS IN CINEMAS FROM 15 SEPTEMBER**



Ali Fazal, photographed exclusively for *Empire* at the Ministry Of New in Mumbai, India, on 3 July 2017.

STYLING: WHO WORE WHAT WHEN. GROOMING: CHETAN KARKHANIS. Turtle neck, yellow jacket, dark trousers and pocket square: Canada Clothing Co.



Above: Stephen Mangan, Andrew Garfield and Claire Foy. **Below:** Robin (Garfield) with wife Diana (Foy). **Bottom:** And before polio set his life on a different course.

WAITING TO EXHALE

How true-life tearjerker *Breathe* beat *Jungle Book* to become Andy Serkis' directorial debut

WORDS **DAN JOLIN**

FOR A MAN whose acting career has been somewhat unconventional, it should come as no surprise that Andy Serkis hasn't taken an orthodox route into directing. Usually, actors-turned-directors start out with an intimate drama. But when Serkis first called "Action!" in 2015, it was on a big-budget, VFX-driven adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. Except that was put on hiatus by Warner Bros. when Disney's *The Jungle Book* beat it to release. So Serkis' *second* production, shot over seven swift weeks last year, is now his actual directorial debut and it's, well, a small, manageably intimate drama. Although not quite that straightforward.

Breathe relates the story of Robin Cavendish (Andrew Garfield) — the father of Serkis' producing partner Jonathan Cavendish — who, in 1958, was struck by polio and paralysed from the neck down. With the help of his wife Diana (Claire Foy), he resolved to continue living as freely as possible. "The script's love story element made me cry," says Serkis, "but what most interested me was the notion of pioneering [solutions for living with] disability in the 1950s to the '70s. To be living two minutes from death and then take yourself out of hospital so you can live life to the full seems like putting yourself on the moon."

With Robin's friends rallying round to help cobble together respirator chairs and refit cars, the story reminded Serkis of Philippe Petit in *Man On Wire*. "Robin had this Heath Robinsonian approach to life where you're making it up as you're going along," he says. The result is a movie that is less *The Theory Of Everything* than, as Serkis puts it with a laugh, "*The Diving Bell And The Butterfly* meets *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*." What it isn't is a mawkish disabled story. "It's kind of a heist movie," he explains. "It's about being maverick, which is what really appealed to me about it." *Jungle Book* may have to wait but, for Serkis, the adventure goes on.





***BREATHE* OPENS THE BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL ON 4 OCTOBER AND IS IN CINEMAS FROM 27 OCTOBER**







ON-SET EXCLUSIVE

THE PUNISHER

OUT **AUTUMN NETFLIX**

CASTLE ROCKS

There's no escape for the guilty as *The Punisher* comes to Netflix

WORDS **CHRIS HEWITT**

A DARK SOUNDSTAGE, on the kind of Brooklyn winter's day that makes the rats in the walls think twice before peeking out, and *Empire* has come to watch the Punisher — the most feared killing machine in comic books — do some actual, honest-to-goodness punishing.

He's the kind of man whose body counts are so high you can only keep track with a body accountant. But currently, he's sitting on the floor of a warehouse, nursing a beer, remembering how he met his wife while playing guitar under a tree in Central Park. "Changed my life," smiles Jon Bernthal's Frank Castle, and takes a sip. The only things being punished here are the heartstrings.

Do not adjust your Netflix connection. *The Punisher*, the show that sees Bernthal's vigilante strut his solo stuff after making a bloody splash in *Daredevil* Season 2, hasn't gone soft. Bernthal, who prepped to play Castle by going on long walks through Manhattan in the small hours with a backpack and a don't-fuck-with-me glare, won't suddenly be busking, like a psycho Ed Sheeran.

We're witnessing a key scene in a mid-season episode, where Castle and his tech guy, Micro (*Girls*' Ebon Moss-Bachrach), stop planning to kill the bad guys and focus on matters of the heart. Specifically, how they met their wives. "Part of this season for Frank is [about how] he's built this wall around his heart," says Bernthal. "He's starting to care about things, and people."

But this 13-episode series, the first non-*Defenders* venture for Netflix and Marvel, is all about Castle, a bottomless pit of fury after his wife and kids were killed, deciding to do a lot of you-know-what. "It's the only thing that silences the demons, temporarily," says Bernthal of Castle. "There's going to be an attempt to move beyond the Punisher, but that's something he can't shake. There's part of me that's hungry to get back into the darkness, that's excited to see it fall apart. And I'll go back to my long walks." That body accountant better get a new calculator.





Clockwise from above: Jon Bernthal prepares to take vengeance as the Punisher, Frank Castle; In sniper mode on location; With tech assistant Micro (Ebon Moss-Bachrach); Suited up, and ready to employ that bottomless pit of fury.



Top to bottom: Out of the frying pan… Harold Meyerowitz (Dustin Hoffman) dishes up for son Danny (Adam Sandler); Brothers Danny and Matthew (Ben Stiller); Director-writer Noah Baumbach caps off another day with Hoffman.

THE SEVEN YEAR SWITCH

After a long break, comic actor Adam Sandler gets serious again in *The Meyerowitz Stories*

WORDS **ALEX GODFREY**

IT HAPPENS, ROUGHLY, every seven years. Amid relentless runs of the usual goofy fare, Adam Sandler gets plucked away to work his *cojones* on something more serious. First came Paul Thomas Anderson's *Punch-Drunk Love* (2002), then Judd Apatow's *Funny People* (2009), and now, Noah Baumbach's *The Meyerowitz Stories*, and it's possibly the actor's most affecting performance yet.

While the action swirls around bitter old patriarch Harold (Dustin Hoffman), it is essentially the story of his two put-upon sons — the unemployed Danny (Adam Sandler) and his hotshot half-brother Matthew (Ben Stiller). It got a standing ovation at Cannes and will be *Empire*'s Laugh Gala screening at this year's BFI London Film Festival.

Sandler is terrific throughout, gracefully holding his tongue at some points, gloriously losing his rag at others. "I've always liked him," explains Baumbach. "I loved him on *Saturday Night Live*, I loved his stand-up." The pair had met once, ten years earlier, to discuss collaborating. "I always felt one day I'd have something for him. He has such vulnerability and sweetness. This is my third movie with Ben, and when I had this idea for brothers, it felt like an interesting combination. They're friends, and other than bit in *Happy Gilmore*, they'd never worked together in a bigger way. This was a way to do it."

Sandler, though, had major worries. Baumbach had told him he needed his cast to stick to every word, every punctuation point, so he learnt his entire role before shooting, scared, he told Stiller, of messing up. Had he expressed his worries to Baumbach? "When you work closely together on a movie," says Baumbach, "for everybody, fears come up — 'I don't wanna fuck this up' kind of feelings. I'm sure he's telling the truth when he said he was scared. But also, he was so open and excited, and there was a tremendous amount of confidence and bravery in what he did. Or it wouldn't be as great as it was."

Sandler and Stiller make a formidable double act: Baumbach gives both the opportunity to mine so-far untapped emotional depths, while the physical comedy is just as strong. The scene where they attempt to destroy someone's car, ineptly and incapably, is Laurel-and-Hardy levels of stupid. "They're great comedians and I wanted to see them run about and smash something up," says Baumbach. "It would have been a missed opportunity to have them together and not take advantage of that." It's amazing that nobody paired them sooner. More, please.





***THE MEYEROWITZ STORIES* IS IN CINEMAS AND ON NETFLIX FROM 13 OCTOBER**

ALAMY

PRODUCTION NOTES

Movies and TV shows in the works



1_

Riz Ahmed is in talks to join Sony's new *Venom* movie as "a popular Marvel Comics character" with Tom Hardy tackling the title character. The *Spider-Man* spin-off is scheduled for 5 October 2018.



2_

Writer/director Robert Eggers has recruited his breakout star from *The Witch*, Anya Taylor-Joy, for his new take on *Nosferatu*. In it, Count Orlock will seek fresh blood in Germany.



3_

Hayao Miyazaki, the godfather of Japanese animation, is coming out of retirement to turn his short *Boro The Caterpillar* into a movie. The Studio Ghibli co-founder and *Spirited Away* director starts work later this year.



4_

Milla Jovovich has signed up for *Hellboy: Rise Of The Blood Queen*. The *Resident Evil* lead will play a medieval sorceress with apocalyptic plans. Neil Marshall starts directing this month with David Harbour as Big Red.



Those long winter nights flew by in the forests of Sweden with no WiFi...

THE RITE STUFF

The makers of *The Ritual*'s five steps to creating a British *Blair Witch Project*

WORDS **WILL LAWRENCE**

PRODUCED BY ANDY Serkis' The Imaginarium, *The Ritual* sends four old uni pals deep into the Swedish wilderness to face unexpected terrors. *Empire* asked the cast and crew behind the adaptation of Adam Nevill's outdoorsy 2011 novel to share their tips for creating an effective chiller.

1. MAKE YOUR VICTIMS RELATABLE

The casting for the film's *Deliverance*-like premise, in which a group of old college mates find themselves out of their comfort zone (and depth), required a little star power and a lot of relatability. Director David Bruckner called on Rafe Spall to provide a recognisable lead, with Arsher Ali (*Four Lions*), Rob James-Collier and Sam Troughton completing the ill-fated quartet. "They're very rounded characters," says Spall. "To me, any horror film should hold up as a story even without the supernatural element."

2. TURN DOWN THE LIGHTS

That supernatural element comes into play once the group leaves the walking trail to take a shortcut through the forest. On set, the dense Carpathian forests stood in for Sweden, offering suffocating cathedrals of pine trees. "Once you step under the canopy, it's very claustrophobic," notes James-Collier. "There's a different sound. Everything is muted, like you're in a different world. All you can see is tree after tree after tree in every direction."

3. LET THE IMAGINATION RUN WILD

The Ritual is a monster movie, though the characters are left in the dark for some time, sparking that believer/agnostic divide so beloved of the genre. "I think the audience should be caught between wondering whether it's human or supernatural hands that are involved," says Spall. "My character is convinced that it is a supernatural beast, while Sam's character disagrees."

4. GET PSYCHOLOGICAL

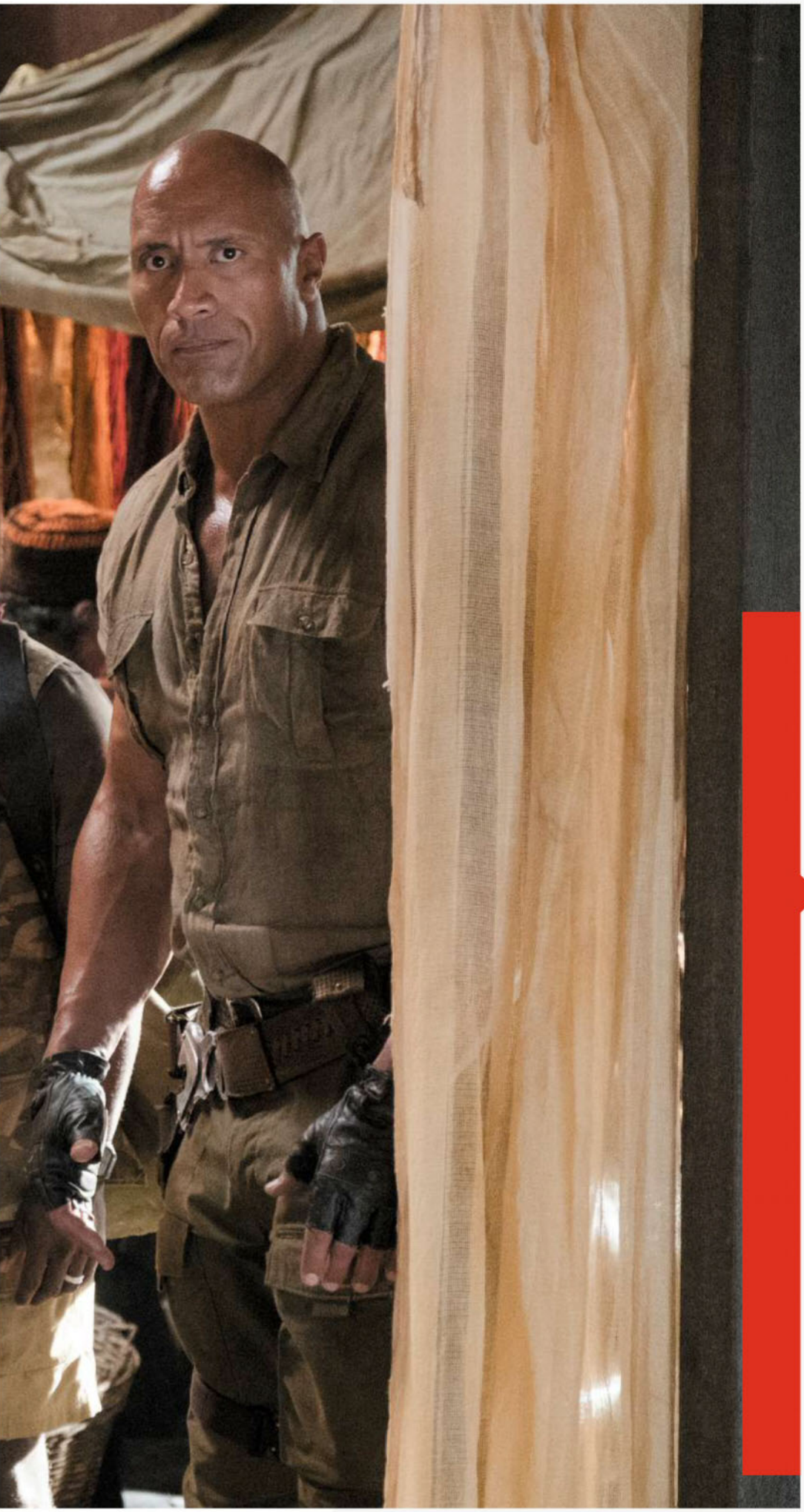
The Ritual's big bad preys on the characters' inner weaknesses. This is shown first through its effect on Spall's character, who is struggling with the trauma of a violent event he'd recently experienced. "Horror has to be a reflection of an internal ugliness, of weaknesses, of our anxieties," says Bruckner. "The beast likes to watch them from a distance and sneak around in their minds. Their nightmares bubble up to the surface as a result."

5. MAKE THE MONSTER TERRIFYING

Monster movies have revelled in the slow reveal since *Jaws*, and *The Ritual* is no exception. Brace yourself for terrifying teases and the odd glimpse of the beast. Guillermo del Toro monster designer Keith Thompson was drafted in to sketch out the entity. "There's a difference between a fantasy monster and a horror monster," stresses Bruckner. "In the book, it is goat-like, [but] we went for something different." Malevolent forces *and* camping? Expect something truly terrifying.

***THE RITUAL* IS IN CINEMAS FROM 13 OCTOBER**





FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE

JUMANJI: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

OUT **20 DECEMBER**

NO DICE

Swapping board game for console, the new *Jumanji* has some surprises in store

WORDS **OWEN WILLIAMS**

BANISH MEMORIES OF Robin Williams cavorting with CG rhinos, because *Jumanji: Welcome To The Jungle* has fresh surprises in store. That mystical board game has become an 8-bit adventure game, its players are transforming, *Tron*-like, into adult avatars of themselves, and there are now movie stars galore. A lot can happen in 22 years.

Underpinning this new treatment is some slyly playful casting. "They're all stylised character archetypes," explains director Jake Kasdan of his quartet of unwitting jungle adventurers. Karen Gillan plays an all-action commando, Kevin Hart is a panicky zoologist and Dwayne Johnson — "the action hero of his generation, top of a list of one" according to Kasdan — is, well, a wimp. Oh, and Jack Black's bombastic professor is the avatar of a vain *female* high-schooler (Madison Iseman). "It could have been a tricky high-wire act," laughs Kasdan, "but it was clear from the first page at the table read that what Jack was doing was inspired."

Providing shared DNA with the original is a "mysterious supernatural artefact". Look out as well for a nod or two to Williams' man-child, Alan Parrish. "We've acknowledged that character," is the only hint Kasdan will offer. Four new big-name players have entered the game; they're going to have their hands full with whatever mayhem lies in store.



USS Callister boldly goes where no *Black Mirror* episode has gone before.

MIRROR'S EDGE

Black Mirror creator Charlie Brooker ventures out of this world for Season 4

WORDS **JOHN NUGENT**

HOW DO YOU one-up a dark-edged sci-fi that's already featured virtual-reality nursing homes, flying robo-bees and Prime Ministerial pig-shagging? That was the challenge facing *Black Mirror* creator Charlie Brooker as he sat down to plot out its fourth season. The answer, it turns out, was by being more ambitious. One new episode, 'USS Callister', sees the show blast into space; another, 'Black Museum', features three stories in one, which Brooker likens to *The Simpsons*' 'Treehouse Of Horror'.

With worldwide recognition and a place in the cultural lexicon secured — Stephen King has praised the show as "like *The Twilight Zone*, only rated R" — *Black Mirror* can afford to splash out. Season 4 will treat fans to a "gruelling thriller", an "indie drama", and one "quite playful" episode set in a "wonky society".

For a self-confessed neurotic like Brooker, it's the latest bold step in an often agonised creative process. He offers an example of the torments involved in piloting *Black Mirror* to the small screen. It was summer 2016, and the show was about to launch on Netflix, but Brooker couldn't decide in what order the six episodes should air. "You know that scene in *Swingers* where Jon Favreau leaves a hundred messages on someone's answerphone?" he laughs. "It was a bit like that. I'd send emails saying, 'This is the running order!' Then five minutes later, I'd send another one saying, 'Forget it! I'm crazy!'" Part of his worry was over making the show accessible to newcomers.

As Season 4 looms, accessibility is less of a concern. "We can assume people know the nature of the show, broadly speaking," he says. He's not wrong. A protest sign at a recent anti-Trump rally read, "This Episode Of Black Mirror Sucks". Brooker is reluctant to give away too many specifics, but in describing each episode, the recurring theme is newness: to challenge himself, and the audience, with something surprising. For the ever-surprising *Black Mirror*, it's quite an ask.

It's a huge logistical challenge, too. Each episode is a self-contained mini-movie ("a full meal", in Brooker's words), with the budget to match. Season 4 was filmed in Canada, Spain and Iceland, with directors including Jodie Foster, John Hillcoat and *Game Of Thrones*' Tim Van Patten. There's the first acknowledgement that some episodes exist in the same universe. Its creator, however, remains his understated self. "In doing [Season 3], I became aware that a few more things are possible," Brooker acknowledges. Now all he needs to decide is the running order.

***BLACK MIRROR* SEASON 4 IS ON NETFLIX IN DECEMBER**





Above: The Jodie Foster-directed 'Arkangel'. **Here:** Andrea Riseborough in John Hillcoat's 'Crocodile'. **Below:** Douglas Hodge and Letitia Wright in 'Black Museum'.



THE QUOTE QUOTA

The month's most notable TV and movie *bon mots*

"IT'S A DUTCH PRISON – WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO, BEAT ME TO DEATH WITH A CLOG?"

SONIA KINCAID (SALMA HAYEK) IN *THE HITMAN'S BODYGUARD*



"I'M THE GRINGO WHO ALWAYS DELIVERS."

BARRY SEAL (TOM CRUISE) IN *AMERICAN MADE*



"IT'S THE FACE THAT SUNK A THOUSAND SHIPS."

JOE PUPPY (RAY IANNICELLI) ON BARB (BRIDGET EVERETT) IN *PATTI CAKE$*



"IF YOU SEEK A DIM VIEW, BE SURE TO ASK A COMEDIAN."

LIZZIE CREE (OLIVIA COOKE) IN *THE LIMEHOUSE GOLEM*



"I SEE YOU'RE STILL IMPERVIOUS TO MY MAGICKS."

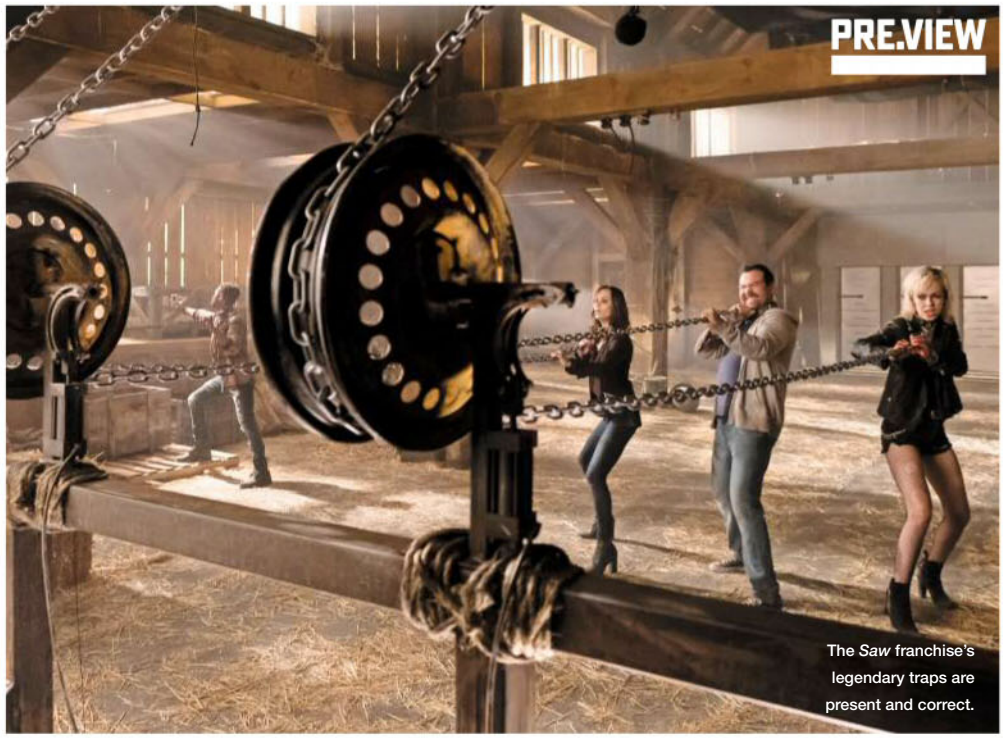
THE MAN IN BLACK (MATTHEW McCONAUGHEY) IN *THE DARK TOWER*



"THIS ONE'S BEEN KILLED SIX TIMES, YOU DON'T HEAR HIM BITCHING ABOUT IT."

SANDOR CLEGANE (RORY McCANN) IN *GAME OF THOUGHTS*





The *Saw* franchise's legendary traps are present and correct.

JIGSAW PUZZLER

Saw's killer has been dead for years, so what's he doing headlining his own spin-off?

WORDS **OWEN WILLIAMS**

AFTER SEVEN INSTALMENTS and 74 of the most creative deaths in horror movie history, *Saw* finally crawled to its bloody end in 2010. Except now there's *Jigsaw*: a new instalment that renders *Saw: The Final Chapter* a lot less final than it claimed at the time. It's simultaneously a jumping-on point for newcomers and a Part VIII for those already up to, well, snuff.

We might reasonably expect a fresh encounter with John Kramer, the killer (played by Tobin Bell) nicknamed Jigsaw after the puzzle-piece signature he carves from his victims. As ever with this twisty-turny series, though, nothing is that obvious. Cancer claimed Kramer in *Saw III*, only for him to pop up in flashbacks for the subsequent sequels, usually to retcon past events in increasingly noodle-baking ways. Now, ten years after his demise, murders tallying with his modus operandi have begun again. So he's back, right? Or is he? And if Kramer really is dead, who's setting the fiendish new traps?

That mystery was crucial in luring Peter Spierig and his brother Michael — the Australian twins behind sci-fis *Daybreakers* and *Predestination* — into this well-worn franchise. "We weren't interested in out-grossing the previous films, and I don't mean financially," jokes Peter Spierig. "It was about doing a really exciting thriller." The promise is for all the traps *Saw* devotees could wish for, but with an added twist of sleuthing. 'CSI: Torture Chamber', if you will.



Laura Vandervoort's Anna at the sharp end.



Michael and Peter Spierig on set.

"What I love is the detective aspect," adds Spierig.

The original studio pitch was for "less brutality [and] more thrills". The entry had to stand alone, too. As anyone who's tried to detangle the events of *Saw IV* without close reference to *Saw III* will rue, this franchise isn't exactly kind to the newcomer. "If you haven't seen any of the *Saw* films before, you'll be able to get it all pretty easily," promises Michael Spierig. "Although if you have seen the others, that's certainly helpful."

So will the Bell be tolling again? *Empire* is met with a straight bat on the big question. "What makes you think Tobin is in it at all?" teases Peter Spierig. With or without the mysterious killer, this surprise addition to the *Saw* franchise will take us back to the grunge-noir roots of James Wan's first instalment. The Spierigs want to play again.

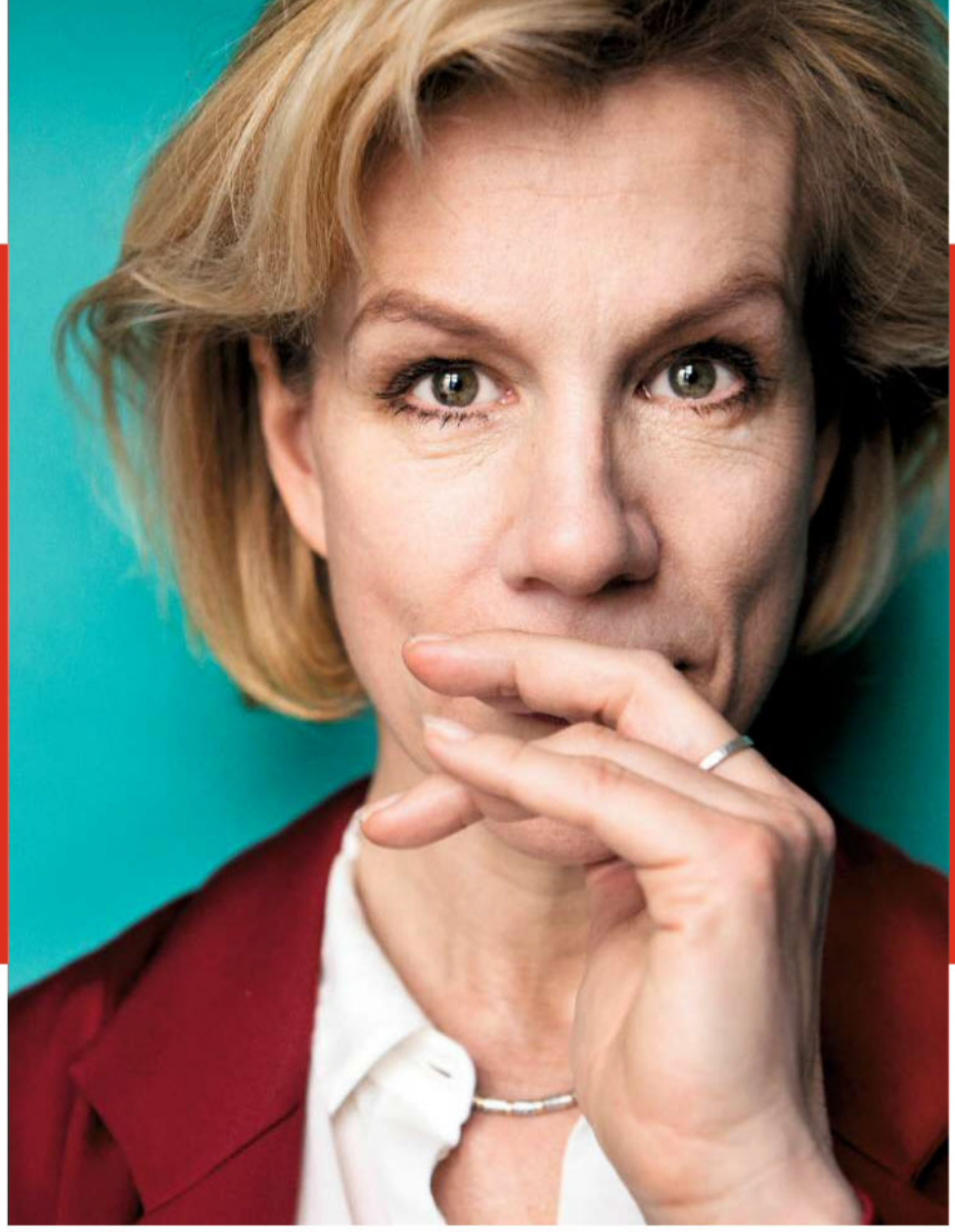
***JIGSAW* IS IN CINEMAS FROM 20 OCTOBER**

HOW MUCH IS A PINT OF MILK?

JULIET STEVENSON

Is the actress truly, madly, dairy?

WORDS **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**



Do you have a signature dish?
I'm quite proud of my fish pie. It takes me a ridiculously long time to cook. I put loads of different kinds of fish in it and the sauce has got to be really piquant. I make it about once every five years, because I *hate* cooking.

When were you most starstruck?
Meeting Maggie Smith on the set of *Harry Potter*. I took my kids to meet my great friend, Alan Rickman, when he was filming, and he said, "Oh, come and meet Maggie." I was completely overwhelmed. Under her steely gaze, I just talked gibberish. She told me she was a big admirer of mine but that made it worse. The more I jabbered, the more formidable she became.

What's your earliest memory?
Jumping off my wall when I was three. We lived in Queenscliff, a one-horse town in Australia, and everything is in very vivid colours. I had a little wall in the garden — they called it my jumping wall and it was probably about six inches high, but in my memory it's at least six foot.

Do you have a favourite animal?
My Cockapoo, Milly. My children think I love her more than them. It's not true, although it's touch-and-go some days. I love sea animals, too. Otters, seals and dolphins.

What was your role in your first school play?
Toad in *Toad Of Toad Hall*. It was outside under a tree and I painted a frog's mouth across my face. I vividly remember the exhilaration of inhabiting somebody very different from myself — although my family would say Toad is not so different from me.

Do you have a nickname?
People call me Jules. My dad was obsessed with nicknames and his nicknames for me would evolve every week, like some kind of strange dialect. My friends would come home and I'd die of embarrassment because of these names he'd call me. No, I'm not going to tell you them!

How much is a pint of milk?
About £1.20? I buy milk in two-litre cartons.

Who did you have on your wall growing up?
Originally a poster of The Monkees, but then it evolved on to David Bowie and John Lennon. There was one film actor I had a massive crush on: Leonard Whiting, who played Romeo in Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo And Juliet*.

What's the worst thing you've ever put in your mouth?
I ate raw octopus in a sandwich in Malta once. I chomped down on it and my jaw sort of sprung back out again. Rotten Arctic char is the worst, though. I tried it in Canada. It was a complete agony of nausea. It wouldn't make my fish pie.

Do you have a tattoo?
No, although I'm fascinated by them. I wouldn't mind having a tiny one on my inside wrist. But I think as an actor you have to keep everything clean and available to be someone else.

What one thing do you do better than anyone else you know?
I do the best impressions of Marge Simpson and Louis Armstrong.

Do you have a favourite joke?
Why did the banana go to the doctor? Because he wasn't peeling very well. It's a terrible joke, but my son found it hilarious when he was five. I can remember mountains of text by Shakespeare or Samuel Beckett, but I just don't remember jokes.

***LET ME GO* IS IN SELECTED CINEMAS AND ON DOWNLOAD FROM 15 SEPTEMBER**

LINDA NYLIND/EYEVINE

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ON.SCREEN

REVIEWS OF NEW FILMS, S… EVERY SIZE OF SCREEN

★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★… ★★ POOR ★ AWFUL

EDITED BY **JONATHAN PILE**





Rush hour had been particularly testing that morning.

THE VILLAINESS

★★★★

OUT **15 SEPTEMBER**
CERT **18** / **124 MINS**

DIRECTOR Jung Byung-gil
CAST Kim Ok-bin, Kim Seo-hyeong, Sung Jun, Shin Ha-kyun

PLOT Sook-hee (Kim Ok-bin) slaughters her way through a drug den and emerges bloodied, to be given facial reconstructive surgery and trained as an assassin by shadowy yet powerful forces. Slowly, her violent past and violent future unfold as she grapples with her role.

IT'S ALWAYS A treat to see the film that a hundred Hollywood action directors are about to rip off (okay, lawyers, pay homage to) before they reach it. *The Villainess* opens with one of those sequences that will leave you wondering how they did it, and marvelling at the sheer kinetic impact. It finishes with another equally laws-of-physics-defying flourish of a fight scene. And in-between it offers a largely satisfying and often chewily dense take on the usual betrayal/revenge/contract killer tropes without ever winking at the audience. Director Jung Byung-gil, who also co-wrote, established himself as one to watch with *Confession Of Murder*; consider him now a bona fide breakout success.

The story begins like it's a first-person shooter, in the most effective use of that style to date. Someone is battling their way up through a building filled with besuited henchmen and sinister lab personnel who pull weapons from under their lab coats, only to prove unequal to their opponent. This riveting sequence manages a fresh take on the corridor fight, matching *Oldboy* and *Daredevil* thanks to some (presumably CG-stitched) camera work of dazzling impossibility, the forces of gravity standing back to admire the artistry with the rest of us.

When we finally see our protagonist, it proves to be a young woman, Sook-hee (*Thirst*'s Kim Ok-bin). Instead of being picked up by the police, she's taken in by shadowy figures, given plastic surgery and sent to a strange all-girls' school where she receives further training in the deadly arts. Such an education seems superfluous after everything we've just witnessed, but her skills are honed anyway and a cover life as an actor established. Adding to her challenges is the fact that this killer is a mother, having arrived at assassin school pregnant. That relationship with her tiny daughter adds a new and unusual colour to the mix, giving those close to her a plausible way to truly threaten her but also adding tenderness where other films have only ass-kicking.

In addition to that bond there's a rather surprising detour into romcom territory in the film's middle section, because Sook-hee's likeable handler, Hyun-soo (Sung), has fallen for her. He must juggle his personal and professional roles, keeping the latter a secret from his charge and the former a secret from his boss. Their awkward relationship is punctuated by cute, tentative steps, including a *Totoro*-echoing display of devotion and a surprising decision after only a handful of dates.

As the story unfolds we see flashbacks explaining more about Sook-hee's tragic background and the early years that made her so lethal, though in such a non-linear order that it's sometimes less than immediately enlightening. There's a much-loved father, a disastrous relationship and a betrayal, seen over and over again as she cycles through the same traumas. But it gradually becomes clear that the backstory has echoes of *Leon* or *Nikita*'s sympathetic figures, combining the two with Kim's steady-eyed performance to give its heroine soul and humanity as she slaughters her way through all opponents.

Really the slaughter is the point, rather than the often labyrinthine plotting. This is a film that prefers baroque flourishes to propulsive simplicity; it's closer in that respect to *Oldboy* than, say, *Train To Busan*. It slowly becomes apparent that the assassin school boss (Kim Seo-hyeong) is a little too well connected to be a simple gangster and must be a government figure, but there's never any real clarity as to who's fighting whom and why. Let's just assume that murder begets murder, leave open the question of whether the film's title is entirely fair and get back to the action.

And it's the action that will leave people talking. Enjoy a bride turning sniper on her wedding day or two geisha ambushing their clients, and try to breathe normally during a spectacular motorbike chase. Cinematographer Park Jung-hun and fight choreographer Kwon Gui-duck should be flooded with offers after this display — but the entire filmmaking team is on form. Aside from the overly complicated storytelling, there's barely a bum note here, and not a jaw left undropped. **HELEN O'HARA**

VERDICT Frenetic, kinetic action meets satisfyingly soapy drama. See it before everyone tries to copy the best bits.



Swede emotion: Björn Borg (Sverrir Gudnason) meets John McEnroe (Shia LaBeouf) at Centre Court.

CINEMA

BORG/McENROE

★★★

OUT **22 SEPTEMBER**
CERT **U** / **100 MINS**

DIRECTOR Janus Metz Pedersen
CAST Sverrir Gudnason, Shia LaBeouf, Stellan Skarsgård, Tuva Novotny

PLOT The story of the great rivalry between Wimbledon champion Björn Borg (Gudnason) and turbulent young talent John McEnroe (LaBeouf), which came to a head in the 1980 Wimbledon final in front of a worldwide audience of millions.

FOR THE SAKE of argument, let's accept the 1980 Wimbledon final is the greatest tennis match of all time. It was certainly the greatest at the time — *that* Nadal-versus-Federer final was still 28 years away. And it's the focus of this biopic: sworn rivals Björn Borg (Gudnason), the level-headed gentleman, and challenger John McEnroe (LaBeouf), the fiery "superbrat", coming together on Centre Court to play out a near four-hour epic for the ages. Borg was aiming for his fifth straight Wimbledon title, McEnroe hoping for his first. Everything that went before was simply background to this moment. The stage was set.

We start just prior to the tournament. Borg is feeling the pressure of fame and McEnroe is irritated by both his reputation and the focus on Borg whenever he's interviewed. But despite public preconceptions about their differing mental states, it's the Swede we see high on his Monaco balcony, leaning over the handrail as though he's going to topple over, before pushing himself back up. Something is amiss.

The title is styled *Borg/McEnroe*, but 'Borg > McEnroe' would be more appropriate, such is the focus on one player over the other. The American's backstory, concentrating on his overbearing parents, is dealt with in a few short scenes, but Borg is properly scrutinised. He's seen as a young boy having McEnroe-style rants at umpires, being suspended from his tennis club for his behaviour and running through a forest in a fury (an unfortunate setting for anyone who remembers Andy Samberg punch-dancing out his rage in a wooded glen in *Hot Rod*). The point being: the two men aren't so different. But while one learned to internalise, channelling his drive and determination into a singular focus, the other didn't. Borg recognises much of himself in McEnroe; McEnroe doesn't have that luxury.

It's McEnroe with which the film has most problems. Not in Shia LaBeouf's performance (and he really nails the hair-and-headband combo), but in how he's presented to the audience. It doesn't, for example, serve the 'he's the underdog and he needs to prove something to his father' drama to reveal he was already a Grand Slam winner by 1980, winning his first US Open the year before.

Because, of course, all this is leading up to that 1980 final. It's not exactly *Titanic* in terms of everyone knowing the ending, but you'd imagine the majority of the audience will know how it turns out. Still, it manages to serve up the requisite tension as the match hits the fourth set tie-break. If anything, it's over too quickly. But while *Borg/McEnroe* is structured like a standard sports movie, director Janus Metz Pedersen's ambitions are loftier — aiming to get inside the minds of two great rivals and competitors. In that respect, though, it's only half successful. **JONATHAN PILE**

VERDICT A sports film with an arthouse sensibility. It benefits greatly from its chosen subject matter — two of the most remarkable characters in sporting history — but only manages to truly get under the skin of one of them.



DAPHNE

★★★★

OUT **29 SEPTEMBER** / CERT **15** / **88 MINS**
DIRECTOR Peter Mackie Burns
CAST Emily Beecham, Tom Vaughan-Lawlor, Geraldine James, Nathaniel Martello-White

THERE'S BEEN A significant rise, in recent years, in the number of acerbic, difficult and downright unpleasant women — like this film's cynical eponymous chef — being main characters. Thanks to a stunning performance from lead Emily Beecham and an assured hand from debutant director Peter Mackie Burns, this feels welcome. Fiercely independent and living a wilfully single life, she witnesses a stabbing which throws her life into unexpected crisis. It's a compelling character study, and while the film isn't entirely satisfying in the way it explores Daphne's privilege or the limits of her tiny crisis, there's charm in the awkward, heartfelt and funny ending that redeems much of that earlier failure. **HOH**



IN BETWEEN (BAR BAHAR)

★★★★

OUT **22 SEPTEMBER** / CERT **15** / **101 MINS**
DIRECTOR Maysaloun Hamoud
CAST Mouna Hawa, Shaden Kanboura, Sana Jammelieh

ARAB-ISRAELI DIRECTOR Maysaloun Hamoud's debut feature has been a huge festival hit and with its fresh, vivid perspective on today's Palestinian woman, deserves to find a much bigger audience than the independent cinemas it would usually call home. The story of three female friends and flatmates — lawyer and party girl Laila (Hawa), gay DJ/bartender Salma (Jammelieh) and Islamic small-town student Nour (Kanboura) — it skilfully examines what freedom means to women caught between Arab and liberal Israeli societies. Both a subversive take on patriarchy and a thrilling portrait of modern sisterhood, it gives thrilling voice to a female story so rarely heard. **TW**



BRIMSTONE

★★★★

OUT **29 SEPTEMBER**
CERT **18** / **148 MINS**

DIRECTOR Martin Koolhoven
CAST Dakota Fanning, Guy Pearce, Emilia Jones, Carice Van Houten, Kit Harington

PLOT A priest (Pearce) shows up in a frontier town to the intense distress of one of its inhabitants, a mute midwife (Fanning) living there with her family. She knows him, and is terrified, and he soon demonstrates why. What's in their shared past that leads to this violence?

THE HERITAGE OF Westerns in Dutch cinema is short and unremarkable. So short, in fact, that *Brimstone* is the first notable Western to come out of the Netherlands. But with its bleak outlook and scenes of graphic violence, it's one hell of a start.

Writer-director Martin Koolhoven has crafted a particularly brutal version of the Old West where the patriarchy rules. He wants to see his characters suffer, then observe how they react. It's a film about the evil men do, and the women who suffer because of it. Not that these women are portrayed as helpless victims, but they do live in a world where they're deemed second-class citizens, and the men will violently enforce their authority if it's challenged. *When* it's challenged.

At the centre of this is Dakota Fanning's Liz who, when we meet her, is a mute midwife living with her husband Eli (William Houston), stepson (Jack Hollington) and daughter (Vera Vitali). There's little else given in the way of character information — and that's the point. Told in four parts titled, in turn, 'Revelation', 'Exodus', 'Genesis' and 'Retribution' (can you sense there are biblical themes in play here?), the first three run in *Memento*-lite reverse chronological order, gradually revealing more character detail, before the snowbound final chapter sees us leap forward to a brutal finale. And Fanning is remarkable — wide-eyed and wordless for two thirds of the time she's on screen, every emotion is portrayed on her face, every nuance conveyed in a silent glance.

The first chapter sees Liz on the defensive. A new preacher (Pearce) comes to town, and she's instantly afraid of him — hiding, hoping he doesn't see her. But it's her he's there for. "Do you know why I'm here?" he asks her when they finally meet. "I'm here to punish you." And punish her he does — turning townsfolk against her and threatening her family before eventually turning murderous.

There's an ending to this chapter, but it's something of a cliffhanger. And before it's resolved, we jump back to two earlier moments in her life. First to a story set in the brothel of a mining town, and then to a family farm where the true nature of Liz's relationship with the preacher is made explicit. Only then, with the backstory revealed, do we get to see how it finally plays out.

The structure is a masterstroke, each part feeling distinct despite the bleak tone that permeates the film, and it keeps interest levels high across the two-and-a-half-hour running time. But Koolhoven also uses it to play on viewers' expectations about his characters. For example, when we meet Liz again in the second chapter she's not yet mute, so we know what's in store for her. The element of surprise is lost, but here that's offset by the dramatic weight added to the how and why. And when the violence eventually comes, it's white-knuckle tense, not playing out as you'd imagine.

If it strains credibility at times — Guy Pearce's preacher coming off as a 19th-century Jason Voorhees in his ability to return from apparent death — it's still a gripping tale despite its stately pace. The greatest Dutch Western ever? It's hard to argue against it. **JONATHAN PILE**

VERDICT Brutal in its depictions of violence, *Brimstone* is tough to watch at times, but never less than gripping, even as the clock creeps up to the 150-minute mark.



CINEMA

INSYRIATED

★★★

OUT **8 SEPTEMBER**
CERT **15** / **82 MINS**

DIRECTOR Philippe Van Leeuw
CAST Hiam Abbass, Diamond Bou Abboud, Juliette Navis, Mohsen Abbas

PLOT Two families carry on with their lives in an abandoned apartment block in war-torn Damascus. Outside are snipers and bombs; inside, an attempt at normality that masks a permanent sense of dread. When one resident must brave the snipers' sights, the war is violently brought home.

ITS TITLE MAKES it sound more like an excruciating muscle spasm, but *Insyriated* is a wartime drama that offers a different kind of pain. Gruelling and occasionally overwrought, though largely gripping, Belgian filmmaker Philippe Van Leeuw's Syrian drama explores the impact of war on the domestic space. In its 80-odd minutes, it visits enough horrors on its small band of Damascus residents to make that brief runtime feel less like economic storytelling than an act of mercy. Social-realism with bullets, the result could be dubbed 'Syria, Year Zero'.

Defined by its director as "a film about war" rather than a war film, *Insyriated*'s suffocating set-up is closer to that of an apocalyptic horror. A small band of residents, including matriarch Oum Yazan (*Munich* actor Hiam Abbass) and young mum Halima (Diamand Bou Abboud), live together in a state of semi-hiding as rifle fire crackles and distant explosions echo outside. Their front door is barracked shut and the windows blacked over. Instead of swathes of undead, however, it's the armed militia roaming outside they fear.

When the knock on the door finally does come, it's the prelude to a harrowing sequence and an ensuing moral quandary that Van Leeuw presents without judgment. Trapped by terrible circumstances and under duress, how can anyone be blamed when impossible decisions arise?

Still, some of those decisions are pretty questionable. When Oum and her maid (Navis) see Halima's husband being gunned down, they decide not to share the news with her. Sure, she may believe she's saving Halima from her own sniper's bullet, but it rings hollow from a tough, resolute woman who has to make a dozen awful decisions a day to keep her family safe.

Still, Abbass is terrific throughout. The closest thing to a lead, she undercuts her character's strength with a sense that, beneath the steely veneer, she's close to crumbling. With her own husband outside among the bullets and their home under constant threat, she's clearly putting on a front for her family's sake.

Cinematographer-turned-director Van Leeuw makes good use of handheld cameras, showing how quickly the home can switch from sanctuary to trap. When a family member ventures into the burnt-out killing ground outside or wanders near an uncovered window, you hold your breath waiting for the sniper's bullet to whistle in. At other times the film settles into the rhythms of domestic life as Oum and her clan doggedly get on with life without power, telephones or running water. An early (and rare) moment of levity has Oum scolding a daughter for using their drinking water to wash her hair.

Van Leeuw isn't afraid to tackle the toughest subjects — his 2009 film, *The Day God Went Away*, was set during the Rwandan genocide — but cares little for the politics behind the conflict. All that matters is survival. There's nothing exploitative in his approach, either. *Insyriated* was filmed in Lebanon and with the exception of *Munich* veteran Abbass, Navis and Abboud, it was cast using real Syrian refugees who'd never acted before. It's the same approach taken by Roberto Rossellini on his 1945 wartime classic *Rome, Open City* and offers a similar sense of authenticity, albeit with more modest results. It feels real because it is. **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**

VERDICT Ignore the awful title, this is a taut drama that puts a human face on Syria's humanitarian crisis. No cheap thrills or easy answers here, but plenty of gut-churning drama.



HOME AGAIN

★★

OUT **29 SEPTEMBER** / CERT **12A** / **97 MINS**
DIRECTOR Hallie Meyes-Shyer
CAST Reese Witherspoon, Lake Bell, Michael Sheen, Nat Wolff, Candice Bergen, Pico Alexander, Jon Rudnitsky

THERE'S A SOLID romcom core to this Reese Witherspoon vehicle, but it gives itself too many stories to tell and winds up giving none of them sufficient space to develop. Witherspoon is Alice, a single mum who, via some drunken shenanigans at her 40th birthday, winds up inviting three aspiring filmmakers to stay with her. The possibilities of that are promising, particularly with two of the three vying for Alice's affections, but too many sub-plots — the guys trying to make their film *and* pursue solo careers; an ex-husband who won't back off; Alice's attempt to start a new career — overcrowd it. Witherspoon deserved better for her return to romantic comedy. **OR**



ON BODY AND SOUL

★★★

OUT **22 SEPTEMBER** / CERT **18** / **116 MINS**
DIRECTOR Ildikó Enyedi
CAST Alexandra Borbély, Géza Morcsányi, Réka Tenki, Zoltán Schneider

RETURNING AFTER 18 years (and winning Berlin's Golden Bear for his efforts), Hungarian auteur Ildikó Enyedi has concocted an enticing allegory that balances romantic whimsy and grim reality. During a police investigation at an abbattoir, psychiatrist Klára (Tenki) discovers he and the finance director, Endre (Morcsányi), are having identical dreams about deer in a snow-covered woodland clearing. But this is no twee fantasy, the snowscapes starkly contrasting with the savage functionality of the slaughterhouse and the judgmental cruelty of the staff canteen. Slyly satirising the national mindset either side of the demise of Communism, this is witty, poignant and unsettling, but also too melodramatically contrived. **DP**



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CINEMA

VICTORIA & ABDUL

★★★★

OUT **15 SEPTEMBER**
CERT **U** / **106 MINS**

DIRECTOR Stephen Frears
CAST Judi Dench, Ali Fazal, Adeel Akhtar, Eddie Izzard, Tim Pigott-Smith, Olivia Williams

PLOT Late in her reign, the bored, stifled and mournful Queen Victoria (Dench) encounters a young Indian clerk named Abdul Kareem (Fazal). After becoming unlikely friends, their relationship deepens, with Victoria announcing Ali as her "Munshi", or Indian Secretary — much to the consternation of her courtiers, particularly her son, Bertie (Izzard), the future King Edward VII.

TWENTY YEARS ON from John Madden's *Mrs Brown*, Judi Dench is back in black, perched once more on the Imperial throne and portraying a Queen Victoria who may be much older (by 24 years, to be precise) but is no wiser (arguably) in her choice of close male companions. Dench's return to the role that, in 1998, earned her the first of five lead actress Oscar noms suggests *Victoria & Abdul* is a sort-of sequel, albeit one from an entirely different creative team and in which no other actor revisits their role; Prince Bertie, for example, has transmuted from David Westhead to Eddie Izzard, on caddishly conniving form here as the villain of the piece. Writer Lee Hall doesn't see any reason to ignore the last Dench-Vic outing, and in fact embraces the cross-referencing. It's hard to imagine the scene in which the Queen tells us how much she misses "dear John Brown" having quite the same impact with anyone else in the role.

Director Stephen Frears evidently realises this too, and having collaborated so fruitfully with Dench on both *Mrs Henderson Presents* (lead actress Oscar nom number three) and *Philomena* (lead actress Oscar nom number five), ensures she's here employed to maximum effect. This Victoria is a monarch trudging through the twilight of her reign, an isolated matriarch whose family just wants her out of the way. At times, during Victoria's more painful and powerful monologues, Frears pushes his camera so close to Dame Judi's face it's almost uncomfortable. But boy, does it work; Dench has once more made this iconic figure engagingly, relatably and all-too-fallibly human — right down to her very pores.

You wouldn't envy the actor who had to play the all-new A to her V. But Bollywood up-and-comer Ali Fazal gamely accepts the challenge, taking on the role of the historically smothered



The Monarch and the Munshi: Judi Dench and Ali Fazal.

(until recently, at least) Abdul Karim, and channels a buoyant charisma that makes it easy to believe that dispirited Victoria could fall for him so hard, platonically speaking. His Abdul is a cheery, optimistic naïf — a fish who's really digging life out of water. He's too quick to settle into the elevated niche Victoria carves for him and too blithe about the starchy British feathers he's ruffling, but he genuinely values this cross-generational, cross-cultural friendship, gently teaching her Urdu, or enthusiastically describing for her the joys of mangos.

With all the racist sniping from the court sidelines ("She'll be wearing a burqa next," grumbles Michael Gambon's Lord Salisbury) and the preposterous treatment of the friendship as a building national crisis, the film is resonant with contemporary echoes and projects them well. The ultimate treatment of the Muslim Karim and his family is abhorrent. But with its predominantly light-hearted tone, it's perhaps too quick to excuse Abdul's dodgier actions and largely evades the fact that he was arguably a charlatan — even if a benevolent one, both in terms of opening Victoria's mind as well as her heart. In that sense, it lacks a layer of moral ambiguity that could have further enriched the drama.

Fortunately, this does little to tarnish the worthy double act at the hub of the narrative. One which proves both a worthy British breakout for the appealing Fazal, and provides a National Treasure™ with a second chance to achieve a Victorian Oscar victory. **DAN JOLIN**

VERDICT A sorta-sequel to *Mrs Brown* deals effectively with another of Queen Victoria's unconventional friendships and reprises Judi Dench's powerful and unparalleled portrayal.



PECKING ORDER

★★★

OUT **29 SEPTEMBER** / CERT **PG** / **88 MINS**
DIRECTOR Slavko Martinov
CAST Doug Bain, Mark Lilley, Brian Glassey, Brett Hawker, Sarah Bunton

GIVEN ITS SETTING — the build-up to the 2015 New Zealand National Poultry Show — you'd be forgiven for thinking this was a Christopher Guest mockumentary. But no, the leadership struggle for the Christchurch Poultry, Bantam And Pigeon Club that forms much of the action is real — albeit played out by slightly eccentric characters. Sadly, it's the least interesting aspect of the film, taking time away from observing the (genuinely impressive) birds and learning about these passionate chook-heads' craft. It's an engaging enough delve into a niche scene, but for all the interesting characters and vibrantly feathered birds, it feels a little too lacking in colour. **DJ**



JOURNEY THROUGH FRENCH CINEMA

★★★★

OUT **15 SEPTEMBER** / CERT **12A** / **190 MINS**
DIRECTOR Bertrand Tavernier
CAST Bertrand Tavernier, Thierry Frémaux, Antoine Duhamel, Volker Schlöndorff

TAKING CUES FROM Martin Scorsese's surveys of American and Italian cinema, Bertrand Tavernier's reflection on French film centres on his experiences as a teenage cineaste, aspiring critic, mediocre assistant director and innovative publicist. Linking the cascade of clips with shrewd insights into the works of Jean Renoir, Jacques Becker, Jean-Pierre Melville and Claude Sautet, Tavernier also acknowledges the screenwriters, composers and journeymen directors who shaped his critical faculties and artistic style. The anecdotes and analysis will delight aficionados and enlighten neophytes, and (as even three hours-plus isn't enough time) Tavernier has vowed to plug any gaps in his overview with an equally epic follow-up. **DP**



CINEMA

ON THE ROAD

★★★★

OUT **29 SEPTEMBER**
CERT **18** / **112 MINS**

DIRECTOR Michael Winterbottom
CAST Leah Harvey, James McArdle, Paul Popplewell, Shirley Henderson, Wolf Alice

PLOT As indie rock band Wolf Alice tour the UK over the course of a year, they're joined by a young woman (Harvey) who works for their management. Becoming part of their daily life, she makes a big impact on one of the crew (McArdle).

THERE IS A great line from Charlie Watts — always the most quotable member of The Rolling Stones — in which he accurately sums up the reality of a quarter of a century's worth of life in a touring rock band. "Five years working," he sniffs, "and 20 years hanging around." Understandably, most on-tour-with films tend to focus more on the former half of this quip (plus, of course, the after-parties), with the long, arduous tour-bus drives up and down the M1 and the restless naps grabbed in airport departure lounges only represented in montages.

For his film about rising London indie rockers Wolf Alice, Michael Winterbottom has chosen to more accurately reflect the excitement/mundanity balance of a year on the road. So while we get plenty of live performance clips in not-so-glamourous locations — "Hello, Folkestone!" — the focus here is on sitting around at soundchecks and dressing rooms, banal tour-bus chatter, and even-more-banal regional radio interviews (entertainingly, and probably knowingly, one of these is at Radio Norfolk). Using this as a backdrop, real actors are deftly, subtly woven into proceedings, and we start to see a relationship blossom between a charming-but-dim Glaswegian roadie named Joe (McArdle) and Estelle (Harvey): a member of the band's management team who has joined the tour to take live photos for their website.

Wolf Alice, you suspect, have been chosen for this film precisely because, in terms of touring antics, they are unremarkable. Their songs are decent and singer/guitarist Ellie Roswell is genuinely charismatic, but in terms of bad behaviour, Mötley Crüe they are not. Cocaine and groupies are nowhere to be seen, while the wildest they get is jumping around a bit at a club they have been booked to DJ at after one of the shows. Even when their bassist injures his elbow right before a London show, they are seen simply, calmly running a stand-in through his parts in the few hours before stage time. There are zero inter-band arguments, and none of them say anything particularly noteworthy, nor even moan much about being exhausted.

Few teenage tearaways will come away from this film with the resolve to pick up a guitar and carve out a life like this for themselves. But that's far from the point. The action here (or rather lack of it) concocts the perfect, dream-like atmosphere in which Winterbottom can tell a story of two people falling in love (his original title was 'Love Song'). The way that Joe and Estelle's conversations begin awkwardly but then evolve into a genuine, touching rapport feels authentic, while the key scenes are actually the ones in which they manage to grab a few moments alone backstage or in the less-than-salubrious surroundings of a mid-price hotel room. Halfway through, the camera lingers long on Estelle's motionless face in the crowd as the band blast through their songs, her thoughts taking centre stage. By the end, you feel incredibly invested in her relationship and anxious to know how it will pan out. The quiet, low-key closing scenes that follow may be far from how you'd expect an on-tour rock documentary to climax. But in their own unique way, they pack as emotional a punch as any great curtain-call ballad would. **HAMISH MACBAIN**

VERDICT A highly original mood piece, Michael Winterbottom's latest might deglamorise the fantasy of going out on the road with a rock 'n' roll band, but while doing so it also provides one of the year's most touching romances.



ZOOLOGY

★★★★

OUT **22 SEPTEMBER** / CERT **15** / **91 MINS**
DIRECTOR Ivan I. Tverdovsky
CAST Natalya Pavlenkova, Dmitri Groshev, Irina Chipizhenko

ZOOLOGY HAS A high concept at its cool heart: a reserved woman, Natasha (Pavlenkova), in a small coastal town has her life turned around when she, without warning, sprouts a tail. Tverdovsky imbues the potentially whimsical idea with zero humour, instead settling on Kafka-esque weirdness, social realism and Cronenbergian body horror as Natasha's appendage attracts the attentions of a handsome young radiologist (Groshev), telling a surprising tale of a woman going from repressed to raucous. If the film's meanings get muddled in the finale, it remains original, bizarre and compassionate to its protagonist's plight, thanks largely to Natalya Pavlenkova's unshowy, believable and affecting turn. **IF**



GOON: LAST OF THE ENFORCERS

★★

OUT **8 SEPTEMBER** / CERT **15** / **101 MINS**
DIRECTOR Jay Baruchel
CAST Seann William Scott, Jay Baruchel, Liev Schreiber, Alison Pill, Elisha Cuthbert

GOON WAS A rather sweet sports comedy about finding your value in the world even when you're lacking in exceptional talent. Six years on, this sequel adds little and freezes out most of the heart of the original in favour of cruder jokes from broader characters. Enforcer Doug 'The Thug' Glatt (Scott) is promoted to captain. However, injuries, a new boss and impending fatherhood suggest Doug's days as a minor sports star may soon be over. Co-writer Jay Baruchel also directs here (his debut), but he struggles to get any purchase on the story. Everyone's trying to recapture the appeal of the original, but it should have remained a cult one-off. **OR**

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Michael Myers, James Franco, moustache.

CINEMA

THE VAULT

★★★

OUT **8 SEPTEMBER**
CERT **15 / 91 MINS**

DIRECTOR Dan Bush
CAST James Franco, Taryn Manning, Francesca Eastwood, Scott Haze

PLOT Leah (Eastwood) and Vee (Manning) try to help their brother Michael (Haze) out of debt by taking part in a robbery. A heist turns into a siege and bank employee Ed Maas (Franco) tells the gang the real money is in a seemingly disused, possibly haunted bank vault.

IT USED TO be a movie convention that supernatural horror films would transform into crime movies in the final reel. As in *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!*, any ghosts, monsters or zombies would turn out to be gangsters or smugglers in disguise and all the spooky stuff written off as trickery. That sub-genre has faded, but its mirror image has been surprisingly busy since *From Dusk Till Dawn* as crime movies turn into horror films, with hard-boiled crooks and cops going about their everyday business of busting bad guys only to find that they're up against something supernatural they didn't prepare for.

The Vault is a well-made, well-written and well-acted variation on this theme, but too timid to go all-out weird. The vault here is merely plagued by a masked ghost from an earlier heist rather than, say, the site where the Devil stores the souls he's bargained for, or the Hellmouth that crashed the global economy.

The set-up is nicely handled, as a jittery gang — three squabbling siblings trying to pay off the Mob, a professional safecracker and a hulking psycho — execute the beginnings of a well-made plan. Sensible-looking Leah (Eastwood, the daughter of Frances Fisher and Clint Eastwood) and aggressive Vee (Manning, from *Orange Is The New Black*) get into the bank posing as a smart job applicant and an annoying customer, then the rest of the crooks show up in fake fire department uniforms when diversionary bombs go off on the block. Someone soon insists nobody is going to get hurt, so you know there'll be a body count — but the hostages may not be the ones most in danger.

Matching the pattern of *Dog Day Afternoon*, the plan goes south. The authorities receive a phone message about the robbery nobody inside the bank could have made and a siege develops, with Detective Iger (Clifton Collins Jr.) lurking outside trying to establish a line of communication. There turns out to be little cash stored in the upstairs safe, so helpful white-collar worker Ed (Franco, with a plot-relevant moustache) reveals that a fortune is stashed in the antique vault all the bank employees avoid. Soon, a masked psycho ghost is in the house, and the casualties start piling up. Tommy James And The Shondells' *Crimson And Clover* plays eerily whenever a radio is turned on. And the bank security footage shows a different reality to what's happening.

Director Dan Bush, who co-wrote with Conal Byrne, was one of the collective who made the 2007 outbreak apocalypse picture *The Signal*. This is a more straight-up genre piece, deploying decent-enough suspense and shock mechanisms while hardly pushing the boat out. Its strongest suit is the teaming of cool Eastwood and live-wire Manning as contrasting criminal sisters, though they're so interestingly unpredictable the ghost killer sometimes seems superfluous. **KIM NEWMAN**

VERDICT Though it could do with being weirder and wilder, this high-concept mash-up — what if crooks robbed a haunted bank? — features fine work from a brace of rising stars.


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CINEMA

WIND RIVER

★★★

OUT **8 SEPTEMBER**
CERT **15** / **107 MINS**

DIRECTOR Taylor Sheridan
CAST Elizabeth Olsen, Jeremy Renner, Kelsey Chow, Jon Bernthal

PLOT A game tracker (Renner) discovers a dead girl while hunting. An FBI agent (Olsen) arrives at the Wind River Reservation and they join forces.

TAYLOR SHERIDAN WROTE *Sicario* and *Hell Or High Water*. With both well-received and his profile raised, he's cashed in his chips to make this, his 'proper' debut as director, sheepishly nudging 2011 torture porn *Vile* off his CV. And while *Wind River* has all the grit and desperation of the Denis Villeneuve and David Mackenzie films, that pair are two of the greatest directors of their generation. Here, Sheridan's shortcomings are laid brutally bare.

The opening is striking: Natalie Hanson (Chow), barely dressed, is running barefoot through a snowy wilderness as, in voiceover, she reads a heartbreaking teenage love letter. It's pretty clear she's not long for this Earth, and soon US Fish And Wildlife Service agent Cory Lambert (Renner) discovers her body and an autopsy determines she was raped. The Feds send rookie agent Jane Banner (Olsen) to the bleak Wyoming Indian reservation the girl was found on, and Lambert becomes her guide as they inch towards finding Natalie's killer.

Inching really is the word. *Wind River* is similar in tone to *Sicario* and *Hell Or High Water* but Sheridan's presence behind the camera offers an elegant demonstration of what a director actually does. "Pacing" can mean whatever the person using it wants it to, but it's one of the key jobs of the director. It's choosing how quickly information is doled out, what to underline and what to elide.

Sheridan makes some odd decisions in this regard, and ends up stepping on his own film. Given the horrendous nature of Natalie's death — choking to death on her own blood — there doesn't seem to be any huge rush in finding her killer. The impact of her loss on her family is handled all too swiftly, with a brief glimpse of a self-harming mother and a father asking Renner to make sure the murderer isn't caught alive. The suspicion is a Mackenzie or Villeneuve would have found a way to make all this land, but to Sheridan it's almost an afterthought, and comes after we meander for the best part of an









Clockwise from left: FBI Agent Jane Banner (Elizabeth Olsen) with game tracker Cory Lambert (Jeremy Renner); The manhunt progresses in the Wyoming wilderness; Cabin fever for Banner and Lambert; Lambert pow-wows with Wind River Reservation resident Martin (Gil Birmingham).

hour into his film. There are striking landscape shots (and some of the best skidoo-riding footage you'll see), but this is a prestige-feeling project without a prestige look, outside those locations.

That said, Sheridan is still a superb writer. *Wind River* vividly recreates the bleak, impoverished feel of a real-life reservation where life is tough and the people that little bit tougher. It's yet another script that feels as though it could be an adaptation of a Nick Cave song — and, aptly enough, Cave and Warren Ellis have delivered another excellent score here.

Renner does fine work, too, totally convincing as a grief-stricken outdoorsman, equally at home hoofing around in show shoes as delivering a striking monologue that reveals why he's invested so much in this case. Olsen is less effective, but has less to work with. By the end, she's little more than a bystander as Lambert embarks on his quest for vicarious revenge.

In the final movement, things reach a grand moral intensity far from the slice-of-life opening. We've moved from a docu-drama-style look at how grim life can be for people on the fringes of society to a kind of Cormac McCarthy tale in thermals. Shorn of the wobbly indecisiveness of earlier, the elemental impulses in the narrative are laid bare. Sheridan writes about the dangerous liminal zones of contemporary America, where everybody has a gun and a secret. It's an America previously inhabited by the likes of Brolin, Bridges and Del Toro, and Renner is their equal. It's just a shame the second pair of expert eyes weren't on hand to give him a better entrance. **ANDREW LOWRY**

VERDICT Taylor Sheridan's flair for creating heartland epics is undimmed, but it's hard not to wonder what someone with more directing chops, and the will to hit the accelerator, would have done with it.



THE WORK

★★★★

OUT **8 SEPTEMBER** / CERT **15** / **89 MINS**
DIRECTORS Jairus McLeary, Gethin Aldous
CAST Brian Nazarof, Charles Tate Jr, Chris Renton

FOLSOM PRISON — AN institution so notorious Johnny Cash wrote a blues song about it — offers weekly group therapy to inmates looking for change; twice a year, members of the public are invited to join them. This documentary, set almost entirely in one room, follows three participants in what must be the most unorthodox form of therapy available. Initially cynical about the process, the non-convicts quickly prove more vulnerable than the prisoners, each finding cathartic and sometimes violent breakthroughs. An hour-and-a-half of burly men openly weeping might not sound like fun, but *The Work*'s clarity of form offers profound insights into masculinity — inside prison and out. **JN**



KILLING GROUND

★★

OUT **29 SEPTEMBER** / CERT **15** / **89 MINS**
DIRECTOR Damien Power
CAST Harriet Dyer, Maya Stange, Tiarnie Coupland

THE LATEST PEARLER from the Australian Tourism Board, this dead-eyed horror tries desperately to be artier and loftier than your average stalk-and-slash, but still emerges as a claret-soaked cross between *The Hills Have Eyes* and *Wolf Creek*. Writer/director Damien Power knows we've been down this red road before, so tries to freshen up this tale of a young couple falling foul of psychos with a couple of tricks. First, we get to spend time with the killers in a failed attempt to imbue them with depth. Then there's a temporal tease in which Power plays with different timelines, before bringing home the bloody bacon. The problem: it's ages before anything happens, and when it does it's needlessly brutal, and nothing new. **CH**



CINEMA

THE DARK TOWER

★★

OUT **NOW**
CERT **12A** / **95 MINS**

DIRECTOR Nikolaj Arcel
CAST Idris Elba, Matthew McConaughey, Tom Taylor, Claudia Kim, Fran Kranz, Abbey Lee, Jackie Earle Haley

PLOT Jake Chambers (Taylor) is plagued with nightmares about the Man In Black (McConaughey) following the death of his father. He learns that his dreams are real, and teams up with the Gunslinger, Roland (Elba), to protect the universe from the terrifying stranger.

STEPHEN KING'S SWEEPING sci-fi-fantasy-Western-horror epic *The Dark Tower* is full of cool lines, memorable characters and film-friendly imagery, but low on film-friendly brevity. Hollywood has been tinkering with the eight-book series for a decade and has here distilled elements of several books into one brief and — for some reason — PG package. The result is more like *The NeverEnding Story* than you'd expect from King's books, with less of the (literal and figurative) weight you'd want.

As the film opens we're told that a Dark Tower lies "at the centre of the universe", and that "it is said that the mind of a child can bring it down". And oh, here's a child, Jake Chambers (Taylor), plagued with dreams of the tower since his father's death, and also by visions of the Man In Black (McConaughey). This is a sorcerer, or science whizz, harvesting kids and using them to attack the Tower in order to end the universe and allow monsters in. Luckily the Man In Black — or Walter, as his mother named him — has a sworn enemy in the Gunslinger, Roland (Elba), denizen of a post-apocalyptic world. He too lost a father (David Haysbert), so brace for some 'shared experience' bonding.

The plotting would be fine, as far as it goes, but the brutal pace of the storytelling means that scenes are stripped of all but essential exposition and there's almost no connective tissue between events. A monster breaks into our universe using images of the dead, for reasons unexplained, and characters repeatedly react in unexpected ways to attacks, as if the script was originally twice as long. Elba infuses Roland with power and anguish, and Taylor does well in the slightly thankless role of Plucky Kid, but otherwise we're left almost completely without coherent characters.

It's especially hard on McConaughey, reduced to pantomime villain status. He swans around with ill-advised spiky hair, and pops up all over the place to order people to "stop breathing". Since he haunts our two heroes' nightmares, can project his image to taunt them *or* appear physically, you're never sure to what extent he poses a real threat when he turns up. He should seem locked in a duel with Roland, yet he has whole teams of subordinates and henchmen, who wear fake skin for unclear reasons yet seem a little too colourful to work for such a tyrant. Tonally, it's bizarre; there's a reason the books kept things stripped down at first.

The action also disappoints. While Roland's reloading skills are extraordinarily cool and fun, the fights themselves are muddily edited and shot in a choppy, distant style that reduces the impact — probably for that rating. Jackie Earle Haley shows up for one fight that must, surely, have been longer. It's as if this has been stripped to the bone, and while one can admire its economy the baroque swirls it excises are much of the appeal of *The Dark Tower*. There's a clear love for King here — and a nod to *The Shining* too — but it needed more time and blood to resemble the story we know. If you're going to sneak in ostensibly ridiculous lines like, "His shine is pure," or, "Have a great apocalypse," you need more human drama around them as a cushion. **HELEN O'HARA**

VERDICT Elba is genuinely great as the tormented Roland, but the film does its best to suffocate him under a mountain of plot-heavy nonsense. Disappointing.

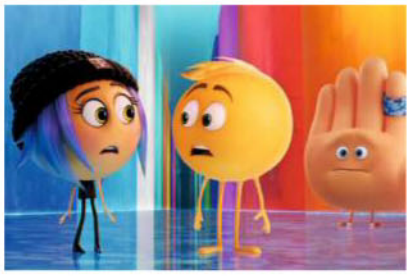


AMERICAN MADE

★★★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT **15** / **115 MINS**
DIRECTOR Doug Liman
CAST Tom Cruise, Domnhall Gleeson, Sarah Wright, E. Roger Mitchell, Jesse Plemons, Lola Kirke

BARRY SEAL DID not look like Tom Cruise. Barry Seal weighed 20 stone and looked like a darts player. But Cruise plays the pilot anyway and, in many ways, is actually the perfect fit — Seal was fuelled by adrenaline, forever in search of a bigger hit and bigger stakes, and Doug Liman's trip through his wildest years fully exploits Cruise's own action fetishes. Hired by the CIA to take reconnaissance photos of South American insurgents, Seal was soon drug smuggling and gun running for all manner of undesirables. And though this doesn't go deep, it's a ceaselessly entertaining, and sometimes tense, romp with Cruise as charming as ever. **AG**



THE EMOJI MOVIE

★

OUT **NOW** / CERT **U** / **86 MINS**
DIRECTOR Tony Leondis
CAST T.J. Miller, James Corden, Anna Faris, Maya Rudolph, Patrick Stewart, Sofia Vergara

A FILM BASED on emoji must have seemed like a good idea in theory. If *The Lego Movie* can prove a reality-bending delight, why not a story about humanity's new pictogram alphabet? But it would have helped if anyone in the production had even a basic vision of the film they wanted to make. It's bizarre how little this seems to understand smartphones (why do deleted apps go in the trash like on a PC?) or the point it's trying to make. Is the phone a civilisation-ending crutch or a box of delights? The film can't decide. While it's tempting to sum up in thumbs-down emoji, when they go low, we go high. So let's just say, abandon all hope, ye who enter here. **HOH**

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TIN STAR

★★★

SKY ATLANTIC
OUT **4 SEPTEMBER**
EPISODES VIEWED **ALL**

CREATOR Rowan Joffe
CAST Tim Roth, Christina Hendricks, Genevieve O'Reilly, Abigail Lawrie, Christopher Heyerdahl, Kevin Hanchard, Oliver Coopersmith

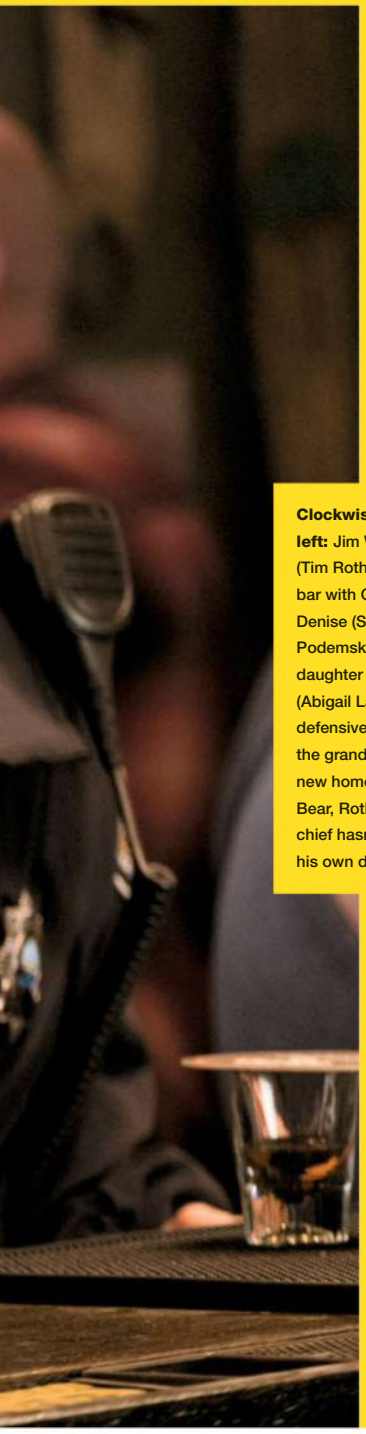
PLOT Struggling with alcoholism and haunted by a mysterious past, former London cop Jim Worth (Roth) has moved his family to a quiet town in the Canadian Rockies. Then, personal tragedy strikes, forcing him to tangle with criminals and shady oil execs in a dangerous, bloody quest for retribution.

A SELF-DESTRUCTIVE anti-hero grappling with personal demons, a conflicted wife forced into murderous complicity with her husband, horrifying criminal deeds in a picturesque rural setting, hard-drinking cops willing to bend the rules to see justice done; not even the most charitable observer would describe *Tin Star*'s primary components as particularly box-fresh or under-explored. In fact, set against some of the criticisms levelled at Netflix's recent *Breaking Bad*-ish thriller *Ozark*, this ten-parter looks like an easy target for more justified grousing about prestige TV's unshakeable obsession with the cliché of the "difficult man".

And yet, helped by a beguilingly unusual and morally complex central performance from Tim Roth, Sky Atlantic's latest blockbuster original just about hangs together, achieving some interesting new things with its familiar tropes and building to a conclusion that — although it strains credulity at times — never lacks for thrills or surprises. Created by writer-director Rowan Joffe (scriptwriter on *The American* and director of 2010's *Brighton Rock*), it's of a piece with his past explorations of masculinity, murder and its consequences.

Gruff cockney Jim Worth (Roth) is the relatively new police chief in Little Big Bear, a postcard-pretty town in the Canadian Rockies where a tourist twisting an ankle is about as rough as it gets crime-wise. A recovering alcoholic, Worth has brought his wife (the steely Genevieve O'Reilly) and kids to a new country in a bid to stay sober and also flee mysterious turmoil back in London. Inevitably, Worth's past soon catches up with him. Just as he faces off against the shady PR chief of an oil company looking to establish a refinery in the town (Christina Hendricks), unknown rivals enact a heinously violent attack on his family.

There's some stylistic wobbliness to these early scenes — one moment the show packs







Clockwise from left: Jim Worth (Tim Roth) hits the bar with Constable Denise (Sarah Podemski); Worth's daughter Anna (Abigail Lawrie) gets defensive; Even in the grand expanse of new home Little Big Bear, Roth's police chief hasn't escaped his own demons.

pulpy *Fargo*-like weirdness or dreamy flourishes worthy of *Twin Peaks*, the next it's an unblinking, naturalistic examination of grief — but, essentially, an intricate mystery unfurls from the Worth family's response to this tragedy. Jim, of course, struggles to stay away from the bottle as he seeks to find the attackers; Angela, O'Reilly's character, has to recover psychologically and physically; their homesick teenage daughter Anna (Abigail Lawrie) slowly wakes to the fact her parents have all manner of half-buried secrets.

What's more, as the layers of what we think we're in for — a fairly conventional tale of a reformed small-town cop spurred into action — are peeled away, intriguing questions emerge. Who is this fearsome Jack Devlin character who keeps being mentioned in reference to Worth? Why is Whitey, Oliver Coopersmith's sadistic British pretty boy, lurking on the fringes? How does North Shore Oil security boss/shaven-headed Bond villain Louis Gagnon (Christopher Heyerdahl) fit into it all? And what's the significance of the snake tattoo on Worth's back that keeps coming in for foreboding, lingering close-ups?

By and large, *Tin Star*'s tricksy episodes make a decent fist of answering these questions, while also swirling in a hot-button subplot examining how the oil refinery brings brawling biker gangs, strip joints and malevolent corporate forces to a once-tranquil town. To be clear, there are patchy stretches. The scripts — seven of which are written by Joffe — aim for an earthy poetry that doesn't always come off ("When someone dies, someone you love, you sort of breathe death in, like germs," says Lawrie's character at some point, unconvincingly). And there's also a wider question, especially given Joffe's big-screen background, of whether *Tin Star* may have made for a tighter six-parter or even a film: stylistic experiments are repeated (there are at least three mysterious cold opens that flash back to fill in the blanks) and as the violence builds, the sight of one character pointing a gun at another pretty much loses all impact.

But just as you think you have it pegged there's normally a riveting surprise or tar-black joke to suck you back in. And a lot of this emanates from Roth. The former Mr Orange's performance as Worth — a crumpled, sardonic anti-hero and bloodied wrecking ball who never seems fazed in even the darkest circumstances — takes a while to adjust to. But, just like the show he's at the centre of, this troubled modern-day gunslinger is a fascinating, thoroughly watchable enigma. **JIMI FAMUREWA**

VERDICT Playing like Cronenberg's *A History Of Violence* scripted by Guy Ritchie, Sky Atlantic's latest series is an imperfect but thrilling revenge saga elevated by Tim Roth's strange, unstoppable central turn.



TV & STREAMING

NARCOS: SEASON 3

★★★★

NETFLIX
OUT **NOW**
EPISODES VIEWED **5**

SHOWRUNNER Eric Newman
CAST Pedro Pascal, Damián Alcázar, Francisco Denis, Alberto Ammann, Pepe Rapazote, Matias Varela

PLOT Following the death of its leader Pablo Escobar, the reign of the Medellín Cartel has come to an end, with the Cali Cartel rising to take his place. DEA agents begin work trying to take it down, but soon discover the magnitude of the task in front of them.

"PABLO DIES" ANNOUNCED the pre-release publicity for *Narcos* Season 2, signalling the end for Pablo Escobar was nigh. And so he did. He had to — he died in real life, and there's very little to be done in terms of writing around that. Which makes Season 3 a soft reset — some characters remain, most notably Pedro Pascal's DEA agent Javier Peña who takes over voiceover duties, but it's conceivable (if you concentrated *really* hard) that you could skip the first two seasons and start here.

With its leader shot through the head, the Medellín Cartel is no more, but the cocaine trade didn't stop, and neither did the United States' ill-fated War On Drugs. The Medellín's place was simply taken by another group — the Cali Cartel. With four men at its head — brothers Gilberto (Alcazar) and Miguel (Denis) Rodriguez, Pacho Herrera (Ammann) and their man in New York, Chepe Londono (Rapazote) — the Cali are a different proposition. Where Pablo was fire, these men are ice. Pablo would kill then use the bodies as theatrical warnings not to cross him; the Cali simply wrap their victims in razor wire, throw them into the Cauca river, and let the barbs rip them to pieces as they bloat. The fish will do the rest.

But most importantly, the Cali Cartel has spent time and money integrating itself into Colombia's administrative infrastructure. This means calls from the US embassy are monitored, informants are picked up as they gather evidence and undercover agents are splashed across the front pages of the papers. The DEA is hamstrung, its investigation initially struggling to get off the ground. And there's a deadline. The Cali Cartel is pulling a Michael Corleone — they've struck a deal, the aim being they'll be legitimate businessmen within six months. After that, they can't be touched.

More than ever it's an ensemble piece but there are two characters who stand out — one on each side of the law. Pascal as Agent Peña is a compelling presence, effortlessly taking on lead good-guy duties as he attempts to navigate the bureaucracy the cartel has put in his way. And then there's new character Jorge Salcedo (Varela), the Cali's head of security. He wants out to start his own (legitimate) business, but he's asked to stick around (*told* to, in effect — cartels don't tend to give people options) until the illegal activity is wrapped up. He has a wife pulling him one way, potential business partners he needs to keep happy, the DEA to keep at bay and a member of the cartel who, feeling slighted, wants to sabotage his attempts to go straight. It's a similar balancing act to the one Tony Soprano had to manage — the spinning plates threatening to come crashing down at any moment.

Rewarding and intricately plotted, this latest season balances its drama with set-pieces of excruciating tension (Salcedo hiding evidence during a raid stands out) while doling out just enough information to allow you to follow the complex world of the '90s cocaine trade without it becoming a history lesson. It remains one of the finest shows on TV. **JONATHAN PILE**

VERDICT Continuing after the death of a main character, especially one as charismatic as Pablo Escobar, is hardly an easy task, but the writers have managed it without breaking sweat. Pablo is dead, long live *Narcos*.



THE MIST

★★

NETFLIX / OUT **NOW** / EPISODES VIEWED **8**
DIRECTOR Christian Torpe
CAST Alyssa Sutherland, Gus Birnery, Luke Cosgrove, Holly Deveaux, Okezie Moro

DRAWN FROM STEPHEN King's 1980 novella, this grisly adaptation sees the town of Bridgeville, Maine, smothered by an impenetrable fog, one populated by a menagerie of carnivorous hellbeasts. The episodes flit between clutches of holed-up survivors as they bicker, fall out and get violently eviscerated. However, there's scant in the way of an overarching narrative, with hoary subplots (jock date-rapist, doomsaying priest, shady out-of-towner) and liberal gore no substitute for actual scares. Not close to the power of Frank Darabont's 2007 movie and borrowing little from King's original story, this *Mist*'s only real connection to its superior forbears is inclement weather. **JD**



THE TICK

★★

AMAZON PRIME VIDEO / OUT **NOW**
EPISODES VIEWED **2**
DIRECTOR Ben Edlund
CAST Peter Serafinowicz, Griffin Newman, Valorie Curry

WITH HIS GOOFY blue outfit and an irrepressible optimism that borders on psychotic, *The Tick* is among the most joyful superheroes to ever romp across a comic cell. With that in mind, it's hard to grasp why Amazon's reboot of the character anchors his manic antics in such a sombre reality. Unlike the '90s animation (or Patrick Warburton's short-lived 2001 incarnation), *The Tick* feels unnecessarily doleful, Peter Serafinowicz's larger-than-life proclamations forced and incongruous against a backdrop of violence and explicit mental illness. Directed by veteran DP Wally Pfister, this is light on both fun and relevance, the character's superhero satire woefully tired in 2017. **JD**

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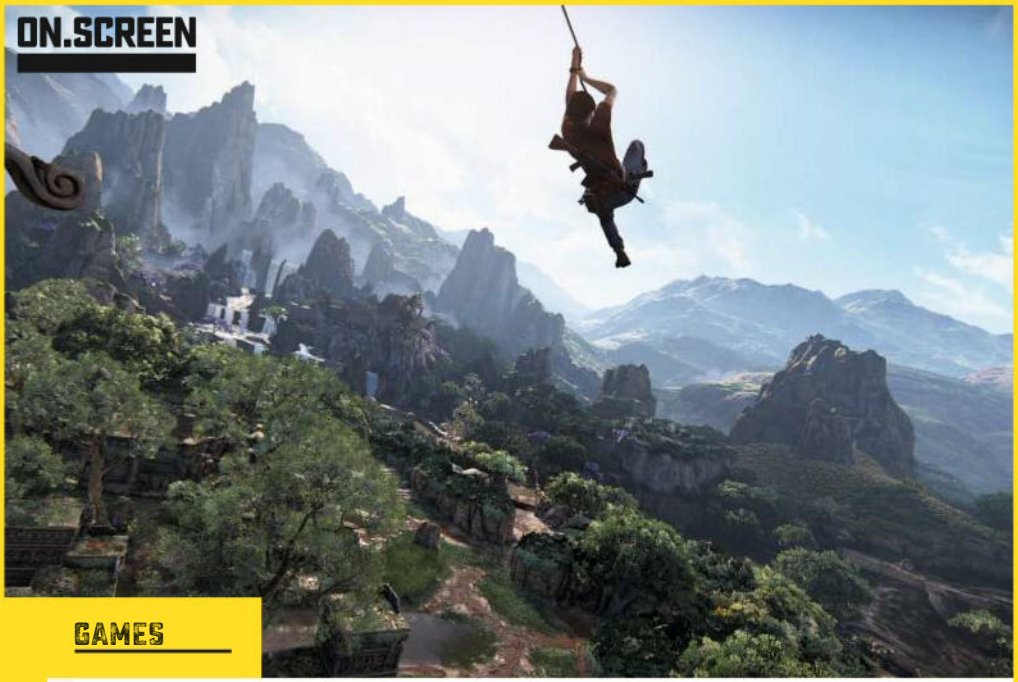
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GAMES

UNCHARTED: THE LOST LEGACY

★★★

OUT **NOW**
FORMATS **PS4**

DIRECTORS Shaun Escayg, Kurt Margenau
CAST Claudia Black, Laura Bailey, Usman Ally

PLOT Set after the events of 2016's *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End*, *The Lost Legacy* shifts the series' focus to characters that previously had supporting roles. We follow Chloe Frazer (Black) and Nadine Ross (Bailey) as they search for a priceless treasure from India's Hindu past, encountering challenges of brain and brawn along the way.

UNCHARTED DIDN'T NEED *The Lost Legacy*, but at the same time, this *Uncharted 4* epilogue-cum-new adventure is a mostly welcome addition to the Sony series' overarching story — one that's so far been stretched across four main games. And it's really the story that's going to make you fight, climb, swim and drive your way through *The Lost Legacy*, as there's very little innovation on display here in terms of how you actually *play* the game.

While this adventure casts you as Chloe Frazer (Black) rather than series staple Nathan Drake — her last appearance came in 2011's *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* — she slips and slides, rolls and leaps much like the wise-cracking, shirt-half-tucked hero of old. In hand-to-hand combat she's evidently schooled in martial arts, whereas Drake would simply slug it out; but truly, the moment-to-moment stuff here is almost every second alike to what preceded it.

This, and the repetition of mechanics, is acceptable, given *The Lost Legacy*'s roots — it was intended as downloadable content for *Uncharted 4*, before Naughty Dog realised it could go bigger and created a standalone experience. And with an eight-to nine-hour duration — *Uncharted 4* ran over 15 hours — you're unlikely to feel fatigued by doing the same stuff, several times.

Frazer is joined on her quest into rural India, in pursuit of a precious relic, by Nadine Ross (Bailey), a not-quite-reformed mercenary who served as an antagonist in *Uncharted 4*. The two become convincingly closer over the course of the game, occasionally commenting on what they're seeing in a very nudge-wink fashion. "Everything always comes in threes," is one such remark — and yes, don't they just, from antique puzzles to rockets needed to take down an attack chopper.

Cutscenes carry the plot onwards, interactive elements typically comprising either combat against insurgent forces, traversal of often-vertical environments (always look for the white ledges, of course), and elementary brain-teasers that have to be cracked to unlock both progression-essential pathways and trophy-ticking extras. One of the game's nine chapters is set in a modest open-world area, offering a few hours' worth of 4x4 exploration.

As is standard with Naughty Dog productions, the voice acting is top-notch, and everything moves swiftly enough to keep the player engaged, even when wearing their triangle button out with persistent quick-time events. Yet, some things don't quite click.

The main villain, the bespectacled Asav (Ally), rarely feels genuinely threatening due to a shortage of screen time. And when *The Lost Legacy* properly refers back to Nathan Drake and his brother Sam, it feels like cheap fan service. It would have been sweet to see these girls get on with it, largely forgetting the men who were negative influences on their past lives.

But then, the weight of precedent was always going to be baggage here — and perhaps the real story of Frazer, a likeably sarcastic and eminently resourceful character, is yet to come in a Drakes-free *Uncharted* of the future. **MIKE DIVER**

VERDICT *The Lost Legacy* wears its series history on its sleeve, for better and worse. Its repetition could impact on what's an enjoyable story, albeit one that's never as blockbuster-proportioned as Drake's adventures.



BATMAN: THE ENEMY WITHIN — EPISODE 1

★★★

OUT **NOW** / **ANDROID, iOS, PC, PS4, XBOX ONE**
DIRECTOR Kent Mudle
CAST Troy Baker, Enn Reitel, Murphy Guyer, Anthony Ingruber, Robin Atkin Downes

THE FIRST SEASON of Telltale's choose-your-own-adventure *Batman* game must have sold well as the second season has arrived quicker than any sequel in the company's history. The story picks up a few months later — The Riddler has returned to Gotham, and shady government bureau The Agency is muscling in on the GCPD's turf. The Riddler is ideal for the puzzle aspects of the game, and the strengths of the first season remain, notably being able to tackle certain problems as either Batman or Bruce Wayne. But the same old Telltale problems surface — the too-easy action portions and the nagging feeling that, good as the story is, you aren't influencing it half as much as the makers would like you to believe. **JP**



AGENTS OF MAYHEM

★★★

OUT **NOW** / **PS4, XBOX ONE**
DESIGNERS Anoop Shekar, Ryan McCabe
CAST Cherise Boothe, Mark Allan Stewart, Melanie Minichino, Salli Saffioti

A *SAINTS ROW* spin-off, which should give fans of the series some indication of what to expect — wall-to-wall third-person shooting action (with the odd bit of driving, exploring and platforming thrown into the mix), spectacular boss-battles, humour of the toilet-oriented variety, preposterously powerful guns and lots of explosions. But here the gameplay has been reimagined as a squad shooter although, bizarrely, it remains single player only. Still, the game's core — shooting the hell out of stuff to make it spectacularly blow up — is satisfying to the point of catharsis. And while it's never particularly smart, there's the definite sense it's the sort of game that will develop a cult following in the years to come. **SB**



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THE JEDI RETURNS

ONCE THE GOLDEN BOY OF THE REBELLION, LUKE SKYWALKER IS NOW A HERMIT ON A FAR-FAR-AWAY PLANET. CAN PLUCKY PADAWAN REY PERSUADE HIM TO RETURN TO THE FRAY? DIRECTOR RIAN JOHNSON AND STAR MARK HAMILL SET THE SCENE FOR STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI

WORDS **JAMES DYER**







SAN QUENTIN PRISON, STANDING-room-only venue for Johnny Cash and the former residence of both Charles Manson and Danny Trejo, is the most famous landmark in Marin County, California. The second is built around a striking cream and grey house with candy-striped blue awnings on the aptly named Lucas Valley Road. If there's a bright centre to the *Star Wars* universe, then this property, with its view across Lake Ewok, is most definitely it.

Skywalker Ranch has been the spiritual home of *Star Wars* since George Lucas bought it in 1978. Home to Lucas' offices, Skywalker Sound and a small vineyard producing a surprisingly cheeky Pinot Noir, the ranch has nurtured almost every *Star Wars* project since *The Empire Strikes Back*. It's rumoured to have cost Lucas $100 million, but the ranch's true value is found in a nondescript barn, tucked behind the stables.

Within that building resides the Lucasfilm archives, home to almost every prop, costume and artefact that has gone into the *Star Wars* saga over the course of 40 years. Upon its endless shelves, model X-Wings lie scattered like children's toys, jumbled among alien maquettes and several prototypes for the Millennium Falcon that resemble an android's sex toys. Near an arsenal of blasters, lightsabers and abandoned gaffi sticks gleams *Raiders*' Ark Of The Covenant and, tucked behind it, the gurning likeness of Harrison Ford, still frozen in grey carbonite. Search and you'll even find Vader's final helmet, drooping and crispy from the Endor pyre — a scene shot right here at the ranch during last-minute pick-ups in 1983.

If you were searching for inspiration on how to continue the *Star Wars* saga, there can be few more potent places in the galaxy than this.

"I spent days there," marvels Rian Johnson, with a wistful smile. "Just being alone in the archives among all these models and props and soaking it all in. It was incredible! The perception of these films is that they're all planned out on a secret sheet of paper in advance, but that's just not the case. I wasn't given an outline of where it goes or even a list of things to hit. It really was just, 'Okay, what's next?'"

Unlike Luke Skywalker, *The Force Awakens* director J.J. Abrams left no cryptic trail to the story's next location, no map hidden in the memory of a catatonic droid. Having introduced a new Force user in Daisy Ridley's Rey, Abrams' tale ended on the archipelagian water planet of Ahch-To, with a time-worn Jedi Master staring into the eyes of this young woman as she held







Left: Daisy Ridley's Rey in the wilds of Ahch-To. **Top right:** Rian Johnson with John Boyega (Finn) and Oscar Isaac (Poe Dameron). **Bottom right:** Johnson gives Chewie some pan-galactic parking tips.

out an artefact long thought lost. That was it. One helicopter shot, a John Williams fanfare and ten minutes of credits. Not so much as a hint as to what might happen next.

So, with Abrams' Ahch-Tosian cliffhanger as a starting point, Johnson forced himself to look at *Star Wars*' reluctant hero in a new light.

"Who is Luke Skywalker? But more than that, who's Luke Skywalker *now*? I grew up with an idea of who Luke was, so the real question was why is Luke on that island? Luke's no coward, he's not hiding from a fight, so there must be some reason he's there that makes sense to him. That was the first nut to crack. The seed for the whole story was inside that shell. I just had to get to it."

More than three decades after turning his back on the galaxy, Luke Skywalker leads a very different existence. Grizzled and world-weary, he is a man apart, divested of the life he knew and wrestling with the demons of his past. Until, that is, unheralded and unexpected, a would-be apprentice tracks him down. At the end of a long pilgrimage, they climb the endless, weather-beaten steps to his Malibu home and find the Jedi Master alone in his reverie. Skywalker, confronted by this petitioner, sets a very specific task.

"He made me watch *Sgt. Bilko*," says Johnson. "I'd gone out to Mark's house to meet him and he couldn't believe I'd never seen it. So he took me into his man-cave and we hung out and watched old TV together."

The episode in question — in which Zippy the chimp is accidentally inducted into the army and subsequently court-martialled — is, one might argue, not the most obvious place to begin a crash course in *Star Wars* Episode-writing. But as the pair kicked back to watch Phil Silvers' uniformed blowhard in action, Hamill began to talk. He told stories of Peter Cushing and Sir Alec Guinness — younger then than Hamill is now. Of long days at Elstree Studios and wild nights in London town. From Tunisian sand to Dagobah slime and that final reckoning in the skies over Endor, Hamill recalled the saga from Luke's perspective. Johnson listened and, as he did, a story began to coalesce.

"I had a couple of keystone ideas, then I just started freeform writing with each of the characters," he says. "What do I know about them? Where do I want to see them go? What would be the toughest thing each of them could be faced with? I started this big document that ended up growing and growing and eventually a through-line started to become clear."

If Luke had found the first Jedi temple amid the rocks and heather of Ahch-To, what could that mean? What lay within? More importantly, why did he need it? Betrayed by his pupil — his nephew, Ben Solo — and his fledgling Jedi all corrupted or killed, might Luke, like Obi-Wan before him, have sought solace in exile? And what might happen when that isolation ended?

"I was terrified coming into this that I was gonna be like Barton Fink and have a script that was due six months ago and I'm still on page three writing about fishmongers," Johnson laughs. "But it's the most fun I've ever had writing something. The whole experience was incredible: just tapping into my ten-year-old self. Even though it's *Star Wars*, the whole thing ›

has felt bizarrely similar to my experience making *Looper* or *Brick* or *The Brothers Bloom*."

The 43-year-old director, known for that trio of offbeat indies and directing the best episode of *Breaking Bad*, pieced *The Last Jedi* together moment by moment. He had a title ("That came very early on, it just seemed obvious"), a story and Luke Skywalker: a central character at once familiar and, he teases, completely unexpected.

"OH BABY, WOULD I LOVE TO PLAY MY own evil twin!" Mark Hamill declares, bouncing with delight at the prospect. "It'd be great because you could maybe not reveal it's Evil Luke until the real Luke shows up. We could watch this guy undermining the good guys secretly, maybe even *killing* a supporting character out of everyone's sight so they all go, 'What's going on? He's crazy!' And then, of course, the good Luke shows up."

This, it should be emphasised, is *not* the plot for *The Last Jedi*, nor Johnson's answer to the Skywalker mystery. It is, rather, Hamill's own take on where the Rebellion's storied hero should have ended up — one he's still sore was given short-shrift.

"When I suggested that storyline, they said, 'Well, it's been done.'" He looks genuinely crestfallen, then dismisses the objection with a wave. "Apparently, in one of the *Star Wars* novels they clone an evil Luke from the hand that got cut off. Over the years there have been so many permutations of these characters that there's not much left. It's really limiting!"

Hamill is, by his own admission, a "fountain of really terrible ideas", from lobbying George Lucas to make Boba Fett Luke's mother in disguise ("She's working as a double agent, see?") to a far more hands-on climax for *The Force Awakens* ("Leia contacts me telepathically, I enter, deal with the danger and rush to Solo's side!"). But while he's hardly surprised that his wild imaginings were set aside, he had expected J.J. Abrams would give him a little more to do.

After nearly a year of intensive training and a diet that would put most Olympic sprinters to shame ("I haven't seen a French fry since the summer of 2012"), Hamill was handed a role that consisted of one scene, two shots and no dialogue.

"J.J. is a sadist," he grumbles. "If he had confided in me that the whole movie is them searching for me then that would have been fine. Instead he said, 'I'm sending the script over. Read it from page one and imagine it just like a movie.' I'll tell you this: when I got the script for *Episode VIII*, I turned to the last page and started reading it backwards!"

The Force Awakens might have been a film *about* Luke Skywalker, but *The Last Jedi* is Luke Skywalker's film. Missing for decades, his trusty X-Wing rusting and barnacled beneath the waves, Luke finds redemption in the form of Rey: a scavenger from the arid wastes of Jakku; a would-be Padawan, already strong in the Force. Self-taught and coursing with a Jedi's power, she looks to Skywalker for guidance and he, however reluctantly, agrees to teach her. It is not, Hamill tells us, the kind of training we are used to ("Rey doesn't run around with me in her backpack"), nor is Skywalker the teacher Rey was hoping for.

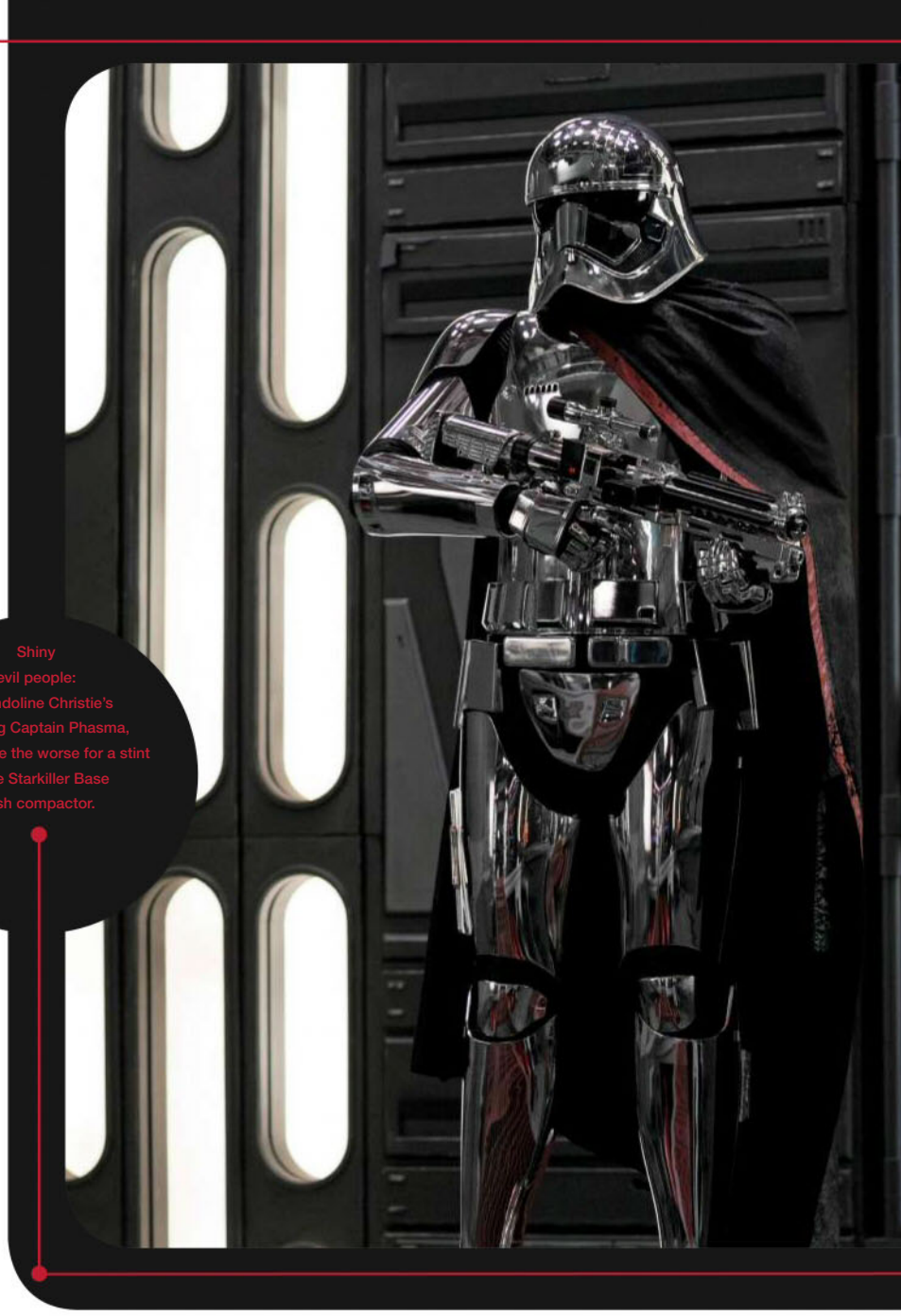
"He's changed a lot," says Hamill. "It was as shocking for me to read what Rian had written as I'm sure it will be for the audience. I was surprised by the way he saw Luke — to hear him say something like, 'It's time for the Jedi to end' — and I wasn't even sure I agreed with it. Being the caretaker of the character I have a possessive attitude towards him, but even though it's not the way I would have gone, the more I got into the work, the more I realised I was wrong."

THE FORCE AWAKENS, WITH ITS stolen plans, plucky orphan and structurally flawed doomsday weapon, was an unapologetic homage to the original *Star Wars*: a love letter from J.J. Abrams to the film that shaped his childhood. Rather than try to reinvent Lucas' space opera, Abrams chose to revitalise it, updating the Empire with the First Order and continuing Vader's legacy through the volatile Kylo Ren. Stormtroopers were streamlined, X-wings upgraded and, with Rey and John Boyega's Finn, a new generation of heroes strode forth to delight a new generation of fans.

For the old guard, the film's emotional punch was a haymaker: old friends returned and were abruptly taken away, leaving us stunned as Han Solo's lifeless body tumbled into the abyss. And Luke, the boy we met four decades ago as he gazed hopefully out at those twin suns, returned an old hermit, silent and glaring on a windswept promontory. Excitement? Adventure? A Jedi craves not these things, but for audiences drinking in *Episode VII*, it was everything they'd dreamed *Star Wars*' return would be.

And now Rian Johnson has to follow it. Because if *The Force Awakens* was Abrams' *Star Wars*, then *The Last Jedi* needs to be Johnson's *The Empire Strikes Back*.

"This is the second movie in the trilogy, so it's easy to draw parallels to *Empire* in terms of a darker feel," says Johnson. "And we do dig into the characters: we're going to challenge them and things are gonna get tough for everybody.



Shiny evil people: Gwendoline Christie's towering Captain Phasma, clearly none the worse for a stint in the Starkiller Base trash compactor.



But I didn't want this to go *too* dark. One of the things I drew from J.J.'s film was that sense of fun and playfulness — that's as much *Star Wars* as, 'I am your father.'"

Johnson's primary addition to *Star Wars* cartography involves a riot of bright lights and a skyline that pulses like the Las Vegas Strip. In fact, if the Bellagio expanded to cover half the Mojave desert, replacing every highway and byway with glittering game halls and bug-eyed high-rollers, it might come close to the decadent opulence of Canto Bight. This sprawling casino city, where the galaxy's elite come to flaunt their frippery and squander credits on games of chance, hosts one of *The Last Jedi*'s showpieces.

"I wanted a new environment that was like dunking your head in a cool bath of water, right in the middle of movie," Johnson explains. "Apart from the prequels, all the touchstones that make something feel like *Star Wars* involve griminess and dirt. I wanted something completely different. I thought, 'What would the Monte Carlo of the *Star Wars* universe look like?'"

Inside one of its many gambling dens, a dog-faced alien throws many-faced dice across a red-felted table, while a yak-faced creature wearing piebald jodhpurs lays out a winning hand of sabacc. With a menagerie of patrons born from Neal Scanlan's creature shop rather than the servers at ILM, Canto Bight was as vibrant offscreen as on, its creatures working tables and playing games as Johnson walked the floor between takes, drinking in the ambiance.

"It's like Mos Eisley but they're all rich jerks, as opposed to slimy, underworld guys," he notes. "They're actually worse: they're slimy underworld guys wearing tuxedos and driving yachts."

Less slimy but equally shady is Benicio Del Toro's D.J., a glowering addition to the film's roster with a dangerous mien and high-collared trench coat like a Deckard hand-me-down. Also introduced is Vice-Admiral Amilyn Holdo, a violet-haired Resistance officer played by Laura Dern, plucky grease-monkey Rose Tico, (Kelly Marie Tran) and her sister Paige (Veronica Ngo). Johnson talks animatedly ›



NO SNOKE WITHOUT FIRE

FIVE SUPREME LEADER THEORIES REVEALED

ILLUSTRATION **BILL MCCONKEY**

DARTH PLAGUEIS

The king of Snoke theories. Palpatine tells Anakin the story of Darth Plagueis at the floaty bubble opera thing in *Revenge Of The Sith*. Steeped in the Force, Plagueis is a Muun — tall, thin, ancient-looking — not dissimilar to Snoke.

AS SEEN ON: Looper.com

MACE WINDU

Windu turned to the dark side in a vendetta to kill Anakin Skywalker's offspring, Palpatine's Force lightning altering his appearance. Why you'd get Andy Serkis rather than Samuel L. Jackson to performance-capture that is a mystery.

AS SEEN ON: Inverse.com

VANEÉ

Vaneé is Darth Vader's cloaked aide who informs the Sith Lord of Krennic's arrival in *Rogue One*. A supposed acolyte of Vader, the speculation posits that Vaneé vows to manipulate Vader's grandson — Kylo Ren — to the dark side and explains how Ren is in possession of Vader's mask.

AS SEEN ON: Fandom.wikia.com

ANAKIN'S FATHER

You'll remember that Anakin Skywalker is the product of an immaculate conception. But one theory predicts that Snoke will be revealed as Anakin's absentee father, giving *The Last Jedi* an *Empire Strikes Back* reveal.

AS SEEN ON: Cheatsheet.com

A NEW CHARACTER

Chuck Wendig's *Force Awakens* prequel novel *Aftermath* suggested that post-*Jedi* the last vestiges of the Empire fled to the Unknown Regions. Could they have met a non-humanoid called Snoke who shaped them into the First Order? Or maybe he's just Mike Snoke from downtown Coruscant.

AS SEEN ON: Screenrant.com



about expanding the *Star Wars* ranks, developing the film's young heroes and peeling back the layers of Hamill's weathered Jedi. But through it all, talk of one character in particular brings the director bubbling to life. Quicker, easier, more seductive: everybody loves the dark side.

"Writing Kylo Ren is just so much fun," he says, unable to suppress a toothy grin. "*Star Wars* boils down to the transition from adolescence into adulthood. That's the heart of these films and Rey is most obviously the one that hangs on. But it's also Kylo. In the originals you project entirely onto Luke, while Vader is the scary other — he's the minotaur. The fascinating thing about Kylo and Rey is that they're two sides of something. We can all relate to Kylo: to that anger of being in the turmoil of adolescence and figuring out who he's going to be as a man; dealing with anger and wanting to separate from his family. He's not Vader — at least, he's not Vader *yet* — and that's something I really wanted to get into."

Scarred both outside and in after his ill-fated forest duel with Rey, Adam Driver's Kylo Ren begins *The Last Jedi* recalled by his master for new orders and, we can assume, a fairly stern talking to. As for the First Order's Supreme Leader, seen thus far only through a gargantuan hologram, *Episode VIII* will finally reveal Andy Serkis' Snoke in the flesh (see sidebar). But don't expect to see the character's inner self laid bare. Johnson is of the opinion that, as far as big bads are concerned, less is decidedly more: Snoke works most effectively from the shadows.

"We got the whole story of Palpatine's rise to power in the prequels, but in the original films he's exactly what he needs to be, which is just 'the Emperor'. He's a dark force: the scary thing behind the thing. That was entirely how I approached Snoke. I wasn't interested in explaining where he came from or telling his history, except where it serves this story."

What we will discover is what happens to Finn after his near-fatal 'saber wound, if the New Republic survives the destruction of its capital on Hosnian Prime, and how the First Order overcomes the loss of its super-weapon. We'll see echoes of *Episode V* as Rey begins her training and Assault Walkers battle Resistance skimmers on the salt flats of Crait. We'll also return to Ahch-To, to finally get an answer to the Skywalker question that kick-started this whole endeavour.

"IT WAS ONE THING TO DO EPISODE *VII*, where I don't really do any heavy lifting," reflects Hamill. "If it all crashed and burned, it's not *my* fault. But the pressure here is just enormous. I love performing off Broadway, or the anonymity of animation. There's a comfort level there. With *Star Wars*, Jesus! It's just too much and it never goes away. It's terrifying and sometimes I don't want to deal with that anymore. It was fun when I was in my twenties but now..."

With box-office receipts totalling more than $2 billion, *The Force Awakens* casts a very large shadow and, as he now steps to the fore, it's easy to see why Hamill is anxious about the immediate future. He, like Skywalker himself, has been in exile a very long time. Yet when conversation turns to the past, he visibly relaxes,





Left: Finn and Rose (Kelly Marie Tran) in the casino city of Canto Bright. **Top right:** Poe Dameron on deck. **Bottom right:** Poe's X-Wing, outfitted with a new booster to outmanoeuvre First Order guns.



any hint of trepidation dissolving in fond remembrance. Listening to Hamill reel off anecdotes about making the original trilogy must surely rank among life's great pleasures; it's easy to see how he stoked Johnson's enthusiasm all those months ago.

"Remember when Han Solo turns to me in the Millennium Falcon's turret and says 'Great, kid. Don't get cocky!'? That was completely ad-libbed by Harrison. Every time I wanted to change a line in *Star Wars* I'd ask George first and he'd go, 'No, let's just do it like it's written.' But Harrison said, 'Don't *ask* him, just do it! A lot of the time he doesn't even fucking notice.' So that's what we did. That bit on the Death Star when I say, 'I can't see a thing out of this helmet.' That was just something I said in rehearsals!"

Forty years on, the stakes have been raised significantly. Fans cling like mynocks to the scantest sliver of plot, from a glimpse of Finn and Rose in First Order uniforms (Do they infiltrate Snoke's base? Where? How?) to a brief look at Ahch-To's indigenous space-puffins, the Porgs. Expectation is huge but Johnson, unlike Hamill, appears entirely unfazed, letting it all wash over him with casual insouciance. It's either the breezy calm of a man in denial or the unshakeable faith of someone who knows he's just made a damned good film.

"I'm zen," he says, cool as you like. "I'm just looking forward to seeing how people bounce off this movie. With *Star Wars* fandom, which I've been a part of for 40 years, it's always a complicated reaction. But it's one I'm looking forward to — both the good and the bad."

In four months, Johnson's *Episode* will be among us, his vision of the last Jedi laid out for all to see. Who *is* Luke Skywalker? Jedi master? Absolutely. Hero of the Rebellion? Sure. Whinging farm boy in need of some power converters? That too. But who is he *really?* What happens to an Outer Rim bumpkin when he becomes the last guardian of truth and justice in the galaxy? When he de-thrones the Emperor and dis-arms the Dark Lord Of The Sith? Where does he go? What does he become?

"That's the question I started with and the most interesting way to answer it was to make this movie," he stonewalls. "It's what I want people to go in asking and what I want them to discover during the course of the movie."

And then, like Abrams before him, Johnson will be on his merry way, leaving *Jurassic World*'s Colin Trevorrow to finish the saga.

"They didn't direct me and I haven't handed Colin an outline of where I think it goes next. He's gonna react to what he feels is emotionally resonant and figure out where it makes sense to go from here."

No words of wisdom? No parting advice? Might Johnson become Trevorrow's Jedi Master, as Hamill has been for him?

"I don't know about that, man. We'll see," he laughs. "I just hope I'm not his Greedo."

At least in this case we know for certain who shot first.

***STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI* IS IN CINEMAS FROM 15 DECEMBER**



REBEL HEART

DARREN ARONOFSKY IS HOLLYWOOD'S MOST UNCOMPROMISING AUTEUR. BUT NOTHING YOU'VE SEEN FROM HIM BEFORE CAN PREPARE YOU FOR *MOTHER!*, A SURREALIST PRESSURE-COOKER OF A MOVIE

WORDS **IAN NATHAN** ILLUSTRATION **JACEY**

CONCEPTION

Growing up in Manhattan Beach, Darren Aronofsky was obsessed with the Cyclone. Something about the intensity of Coney Island's famous wooden rollercoaster spoke to the embryonic director: the slow, ratcheted upward climb; the freefalling and switchbacks; the chorus of screams. It was terror by design. He would ride it every summer. And watch other riders get off with jelly legs and huge grins.

Zoom forward 30 years and Aronofsky is a filmmaker notorious for taking studio movies with big, beautiful stars to violent and hallucinatory extremes. His $60,000 black-and-white debut, *Pi*, depicted a paranoid number theorist who thinks he's discovered a code sent by God. His second, a devastating adaptation of Hubert Selby Jr's heroin-seeped tragedy *Requiem For A Dream*, descended into a vortex of sexual degradation and amputation.

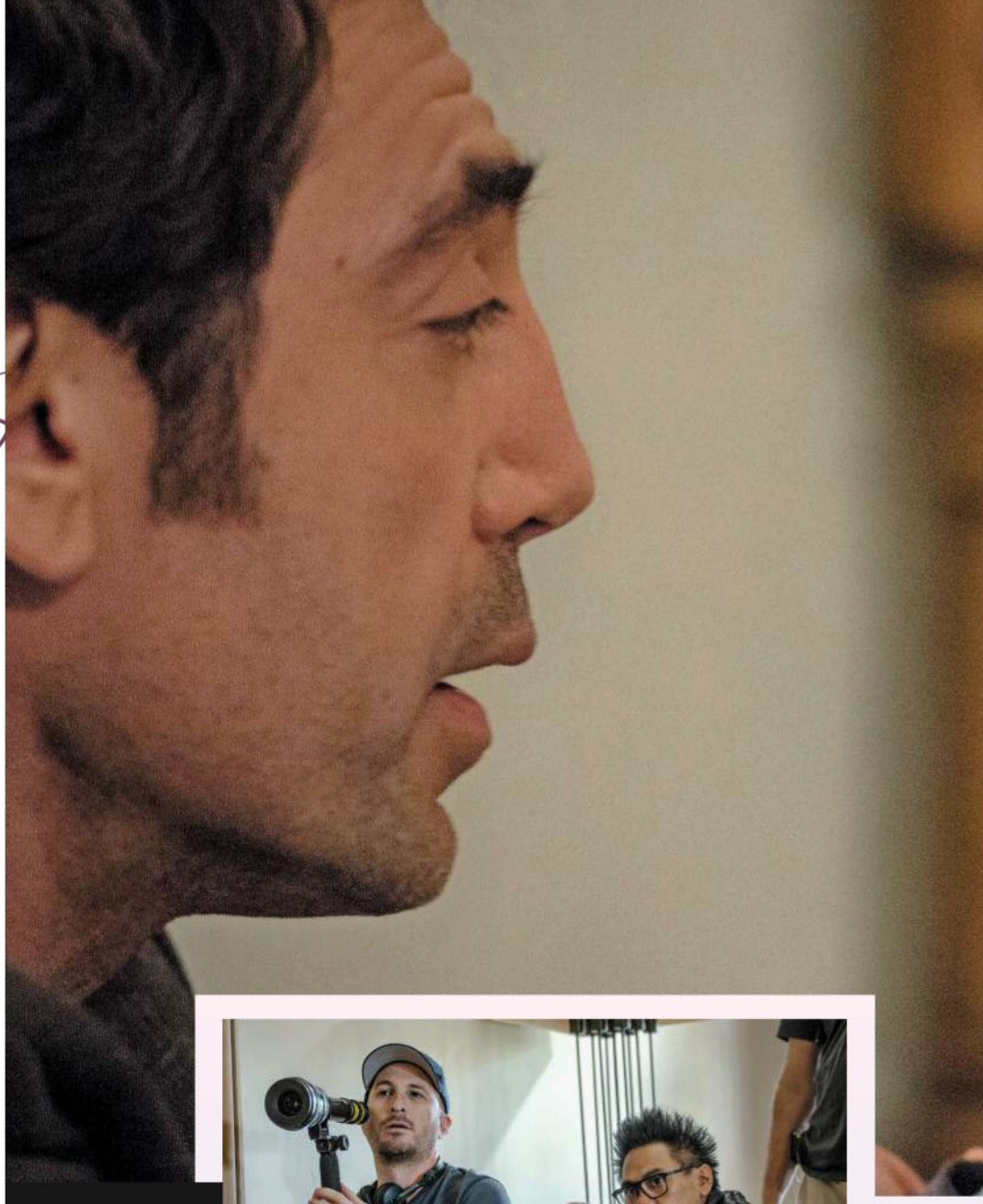
For the smash-hit, Oscar-winning *Black Swan*, he transformed the prim glissade of professional ballet into a psychosexual burlesque, in which Natalie Portman's hyper-neurotic ballerina also played her own diabolic doppelgänger. The act of creation is always a short stop from madness. In *The Wrestler*, arguably Aronofsky's most mainstream film, Mickey Rourke's fading fighter staple-guns his own forehead.

"I really don't want to be McDonald's, where people are entertained and that is that," the 48-year-old laughs. "I want people to talk about my films."

His latest, *mother!* (the eccentric styling used is all grist to the mystery), is certain to be endlessly pored over. It is surely the apotheosis of his bedevilments; his most ambitious and confounding exercise in cinematic extremity. And it torments one of Hollywood's biggest stars.

In the beginning, however, was a bad case of writer's block. Well, writer's itch. Aronofsky was deep into the script for, of all things, a kids' movie. "Something very personal," he says of the project, which contained elements of his own comfortable Jewish-New York upbringing. "But I was kind of struggling with it, as you always do." Inspiration, he notes, is most often just your brain trying to distract you from whatever it is you are supposed to be doing.

He knew well enough to scribble the idea down. It was certainly strange: a dark romance, more or less a chamber piece, which like his apocalyptic 2014 *Noah* was loosely inspired by his environmental work. "Those issues are important to me," he says. "But I'm not the kind of guy to do a biopic of the guy who started Greenpeace."





Clockwise from above: Javier Bardem with screen wife Jennifer Lawrence; Developments drive Lawrence up the wall; The couple's house, soon to be overrun; Darren Aronofsky with DP Matthew Libatique.

It had struck him that where his parents' generation had been stunned by dire visions of Vietnam beamed into their living rooms via TV sets, society was now assaulted by a blitzkrieg of images resembling Biblical plagues, pinging onto our smartphones: war, famine, poverty, terrorism, umpteen banking crises.

"You just realise how fragile and how insane the world is, the razor edge that we are surviving on. I was also inspired by some personal things, some heartache, and that feeling of being a parent where we are kind of impotent yet filled with rage."

Aronofsky is a contradictory soul. The Brooklyn kid loved Spielberg and Lucas, whereas the knowing Harvard film and social anthropology student dedicated himself to foreign masters. He has flirted with a *Batman* reboot (to star Clint Eastwood), a messianic take on *Superman*, a *RoboCop* revamp and a film that would kill Wolverine, and we can only hungrily imagine what he would have made of any of them. But his path has led him deeper and darker into the wilderness of his own cravings.

A couple of weeks on from his frenzied scribblings, he found himself at a loose end and sat down at his laptop to see where the idea took him. "It just blew out of me like a fever dream," he remembers. "I couldn't stop. I sat there, not eating, in my underwear the whole time. I wrote







the whole thing in five days."

Exhausted but exhilarated, he sent the script to producing partners Scott Franklin and Ari Handel, who he could rely on for a frank assessment. Had he lost his mind? Or was there, maybe, something there?

They were taken aback but impressed, and suggested he risk getting it into the hands of potential stars. Aronofsky's immediate thought was to text his friend Jennifer Lawrence, warning her he was about to send over his new script. He promised it wouldn't be like anything she had read before.

The premise is deceptively simple. Lawrence's shy, young wife lives in a large country house with her older husband (Javier Bardem), a poet of great repute suffering his own Barton Funk. She, meanwhile, is singlehandedly renovating the house, and is certainly not ready for the unwelcome stranger at their door (Ed Harris). He claims to be a surgeon — no-one gives a name — but he chain-smokes, often indoors. Neglecting his wife's growing agitation, the husband becomes strangely preoccupied by their guest. Following the discovery of a bloody parcel in the loo, the surgeon's wife (Michelle Pfeiffer) arrives and she's completely impossible. When their crazy offspring turn up, all goes to hell — as it were.

Lawrence's reaction was to hurl the script across the room and text Aronofsky back: "There is something seriously wrong with you." Having slept on it, she texted him again: "By the way, it's a masterpiece."

She laughs. "There was a full 24 hours where everybody thought I had turned it down in a really huge way. But it was like reading poetry or scripture, or Darren's diaries: excerpts from a fucked-up mind."

"The second you have Jennifer Lawrence, you have a movie," says Aronofsky. Whatever qualms Paramount's marketing department may have had, they were well aware Aronofsky was never going to deliver *Ride Along*. In under a year from that initial writing session he was shooting.

Told with an intensity feverish even by the standards of cinematic hysteria the director has already set, *mother!* plummets from comic absurdity into frantic nightmare, as hundreds of house guests swarm through the fragile house. *mother!* isn't predicated on a single, chilling twist like *The Sixth Sense*; here *everything* is twist. There are, Aronofsky is willing to admit, two things going on.

On one hand it is a "big, strong allegory". Everything serves as a potential symbol that fits within the film's ulterior meanings. Something you must decipher like a puzzle. All of Aronofsky's obsessions lurk beneath the cracking plaster: mysticism, religion, numerology, astrology, life, the universe and everything. Lawrence was delighted to finally put her Kentucky childhood Bible study class to use, amazed at how her director has "taken thousand-year-old themes and turned them into a story about what it means to be human". You could see it as an environmental parable, but one that never leaves the interior of a capacious but confusing house that ›





Left: Bardem tackles Domhnall Gleeson, the first of many uninvited guests. **Below:** The mystery couple — Michelle Pfeiffer and Ed Harris — appear.

previously burned down.

"But underlying that is a true emotional story as well," insists the director, who began dating Lawrence during the production. "People who have seen it are able to relate to this as a relationship drama between an older man and a younger woman, which is clearly intended. It is always a critique in Hollywood about old movie stars being cast with young ingénues."

GESTATION

He had never actually pictured the house, but Aronofsky knew it had to be Victorian. The right aesthetic was key. The film appears to be contemporary, but there is something classical about the setting, the kind of big, bony pad harbouring secrets in the basement. "I also knew I wanted the house to have a very circular nature," he adds, no stranger to renovation himself, having worked on his own home (which he calls his "fourth film") between *The Fountain* and *The Wrestler*. "I wanted it to be a confused layout, something the audience would have to learn."

When his production designer suggested an octagon house — an eight-sided architecture popular in 19th-century America — Aronofsky was smitten. The style offered a bewildering variety of angles, with the central winding stairway an echo of that twisting Cyclone. Moreover, if you turn the number eight sideways, it becomes the symbol for infinity.

Shooting in Montreal, the production built two versions of their all-encompassing residence, one on location to allow heavenly daylight to pour through the windows (impossible to replicate in a studio). Once night had fallen, they swapped to the set.

During rehearsal they drew a large chalk outline of the interior to plot out the film's constant anxious motion and Polanski-like claustrophobia ("He is an inspiration, full-stop," says Aronofsky of the *Rosemary's Baby* director). Meanwhile, the script evolved. "It was a guide, but not the Bible," says Bardem. "Things were happening: it was flexible, it was dynamic, it was alive."

The Spanish star describes his poet character as a man driven by a passion for creation, almost to the point of obsession. He has known people like that in his career, powerful people who are always vulnerable. They can be very difficult to deal with. The most important thing was to bring a sense of realism to the story. "And to only point to the allegorical feel," Bardem explains. "Then you hand that to Darren."

With Aronofsky, actors tend to suspect there might be something more going on. "Then they want to talk to me," he laughs. Pfeiffer in particular, who like Harris plays a perversely childish character, with little respect for personal boundaries, had a lot of questions. "She immediately got the character that she was going to play," he says. "But it took her a while to understand the larger picture I was going for."

Lawrence describes the wife, a constant source of food for her ungrateful guests, as "very loving, very feminine, and very handy round the house". The latter not being something the actor had any affinity with. "Me? No, I would just end up paying someone to undo what I've just done."

To accompany the off-kilter storytelling, Aronofsky devised an equally disorientating approach to his filmmaking. The camera never leaves Lawrence's increasingly distraught wife as she dashes round her home, trying vainly to restore order. Bardem calls the frenzied choreography a "dance"; the film spins, lurches and plunges, emotionally and physically. There were times when the actor had no idea what was about to happen in a scene. He prayed his director was in control.

"There are only three shots in the language of this movie," explains Aronofsky. "Over her shoulder, on her face, or a POV of what she is looking at. That made Jen's job unbelievably difficult." He has calculated that 66 minutes of the two-hour running time is devoted to Lawrence's desperate face. "But you are not bored, because she is a remarkable actor who is constantly making you think."

The burden for Lawrence was immense. Even solo-dramas like *Castaway* or *Buried* are ›

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House party: Well, that escalated quickly.

not as tightly wound around the perspective of one character. "We shot pretty chronologically," she reports. "It started very intimately, just the [lead] actors, Darren and the camera guys, then it grew to 20 extras, to 50, to 100 extras. It became overwhelming, and the set continued to get dirtier and dirtier and dirtier."

As the struggle within the house mounts, so her renovations disintegrate alongside her fragile psyche, like a demonic reboot of *The Money Pit*. Events grow savage as fans and worshippers of the poet turn on his wife.

"This was the hardest movie of my life," Lawrence admits. "It was just the most energy I have had to put into something. It was mentally hard to go to such a dark place. And it was tough to snap out of it."

She has never felt so out of control. In one scene she ventilated so hard she popped a rib. Later, the crew could only gape when, on cut, the leading lady fled the set in tears, with the director giving chase, shouting, "It's not real! It's not real!"

BIRTH

Lawrence has no idea how audiences will respond to *mother!*. She honestly doesn't. It's likely to infuriate some, freak out others, and enthral yet more.

"It was a scary movie to make," she says. "And it is a scary movie to release."

The bloodstained trailer hints at straight-up horror, but the genre here is Aronofsky. The twinned, lurid posters of poet and wife, the latter depicting Lawrence clutching her heart in her hands, have already inspired a whirligig of interpretations.

"My taste has always been a step to the side of the median," says the director, who spent 52 weeks in post trying to make sense of his images. "I don't know if you would call *Black Swan* a horror film. *The Wrestler* wasn't really a sports movie. *The Fountain* wasn't really a science-fiction film. *Noah* wasn't a typical Biblical movie."

Indeed, you could read *mother!* as Aronofsky's response to his trials on *Noah*, where the film's elastic approach to the Old Testament was compromised in order to appeal to the faith market.

"Look, anytime you throw a hand grenade into the cultural pot, something happens," he says. "I think that tragedy as a form is something that has been lost in Western society. All our movies have happy endings; our culture has become Disneyfied. But I am coming from a good place, with hope."

Bardem, for one, sees *mother!* as an optimistic film, despite its macabre imagery. "There was one thing for me that meant a lot," he offers, "which is the idea of needing to belong. We are created to belong to one another, and to something bigger than ourselves. With the world going the way it is going, it is a film for its time."

Whatever your reaction, it confirms Aronofsky as Hollywood's foremost provocateur and the only director in the world willing to use the word "allegory" in a studio pitch meeting. "Everything comes from his mind," says Lawrence. This is his creation. Amen.

***MOTHER!* IS IN CINEMAS FROM 15 SEPTEMBER**



MARKED FOR SUCCESS

mother! isn't the only film title to deploy an exclamation mark

Safety Last! (1923)
Harold Lloyd's death-defying swing from a clock alone earns the dramatic punctuation. The daredevil actor could probably hang from it.

Them! (1954)
This giant-radioactive-ants classic is the perfect B-movie use of the dramatic screamer. Homaged by *Attack Of The Killer Tomatoes!* and *Mars Attacks!*.

Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill! (1965)
Russ Meyer's philosophy was essentially, "If something is worth doing, it's worth overdoing." This went for punctuation as well as attitude and campery.

Oliver! (1968)
Fact! Carol Reed's toe-tappin' musical is the only Best Picture-winner to have an exclamation mark in the title.

Airplane! (1980)
ZAZ's use of the gasper as an extra level of irony was a recurring weapon in their arsenal. Case in point: *The Naked Gun: From The Files Of Police Squad!*.

¡Three Amigos! (1986)
John Landis' comedy, an off-the-wall riff on *The Magnificent Seven*, gives you a bonus Spanish-style exclamation mark at the front for free.

Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot (1992)
A rare case of the exclamation mark in the body of the title. If the title ended with *Stop!*, it might have better reflected audience reaction globally.

The Informant! (2009)
If the lower case of *sex, lies, and videotape* is understatement, Steven Soderbergh's whistleblowing drama is the exclamation mark as droll indie grace note. **IAN FREER**

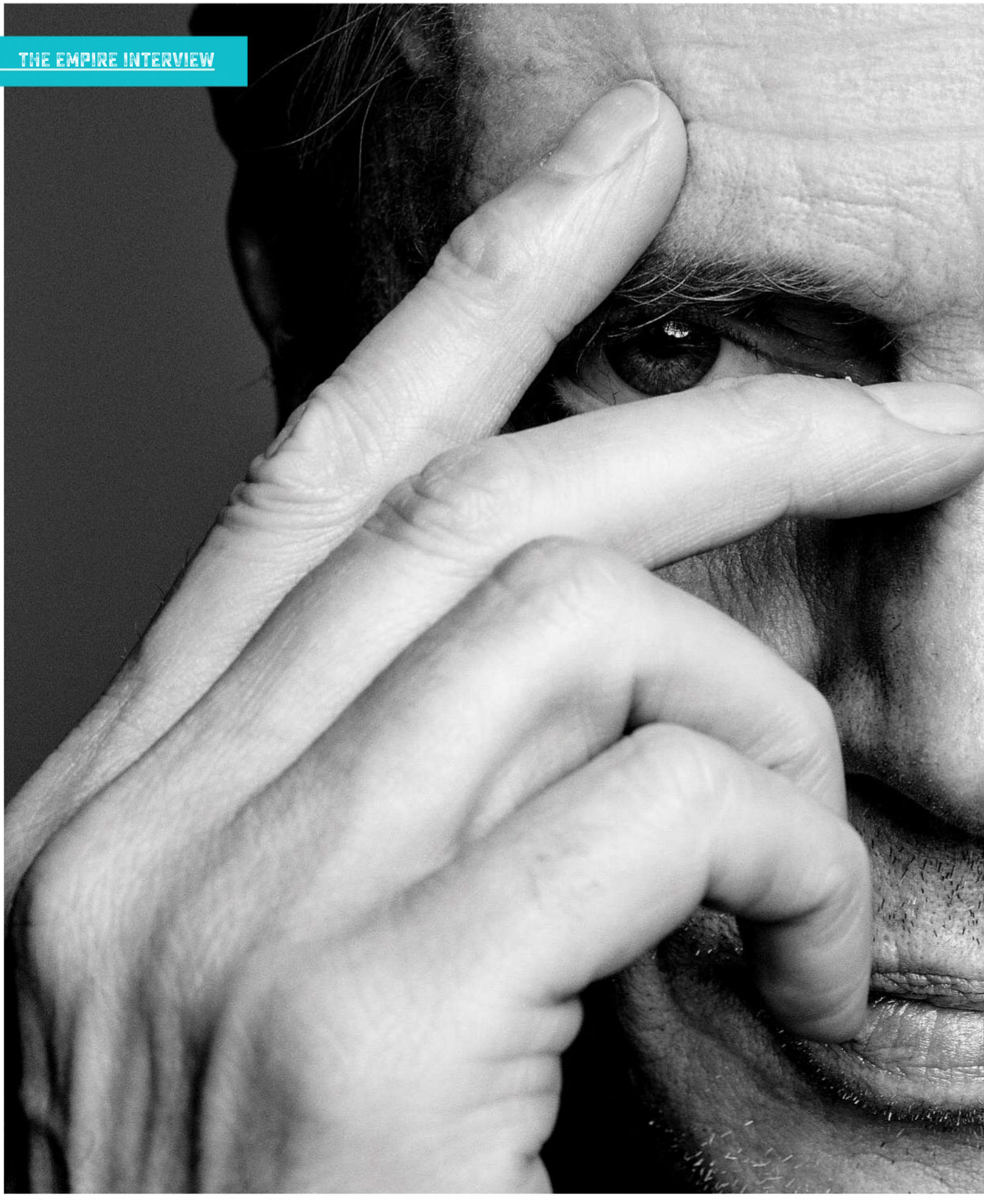
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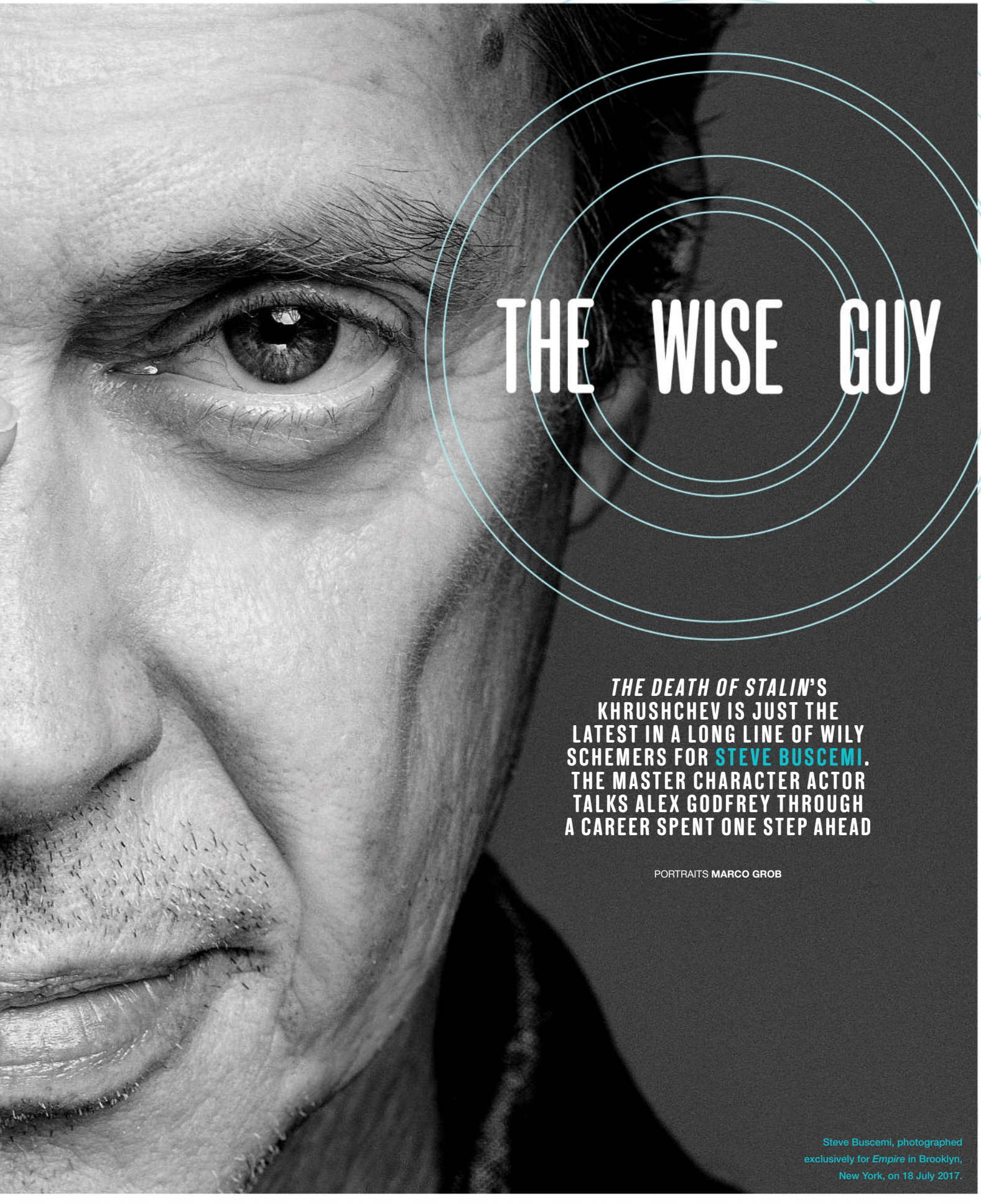


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THE WISE GUY

***THE DEATH OF STALIN*'S KHRUSHCHEV IS JUST THE LATEST IN A LONG LINE OF WILY SCHEMERS FOR STEVE BUSCEMI. THE MASTER CHARACTER ACTOR TALKS ALEX GODFREY THROUGH A CAREER SPENT ONE STEP AHEAD**

PORTRAITS **MARCO GROB**

Steve Buscemi, photographed exclusively for *Empire* in Brooklyn, New York, on 18 July 2017.

MY INTRODUCTION TO STEVE BUSCEMI IS EVERYTHING you'd fear, which, perversely, is everything you'd want. Due to some miscommunication, I'm in the adjoining room to the Brooklyn photo studio, gormlessly unaware that the shoot wrapped ten minutes ago. "He was about to leave!" the photographer says when he finds me, leading me into the studio, where Buscemi looks agitated. "You were hiding in plain sight!" says Buscemi, looking like Mr Pink, sounding like Mr Pink, in a space not unlike a warehouse. It's not good for your nerves. Of course, he's absolutely fine, and gentlemanly too. There's just all that baggage.

From *Reservoir Dogs* to *Fargo* to this month's *The Death Of Stalin*, Buscemi is all too convincing as cerebral hotheads, unleashing machine-gun diatribes and not letting go, a dog with a bone. In the latter film, directed and co-written by Armando Iannucci (*The Thick Of It*, *Veep*), Buscemi plays Nikita Khrushchev, one of the Politburo's highest in command, who bashes heads with an unpleasant array of nemeses in the power struggle after Russia's tyrant-in-chief kicks the bucket. As you would expect from Iannucci, it's both dark and hilarious, with Buscemi on frightening form.

Buscemi was born in Brooklyn, and still lives there today. Raised in a working-class family — his father was a garbage collector for the sanitation department, his mother a hotel hostess — he became a fireman in Little Italy. Meanwhile he'd been taking acting lessons and getting into comedy, hanging out and performing at the New York clubs, and after four years he quit the firefighting, bagging his first film role (opposite Vincent Gallo in black-and-white arthouse movie *The Way It Is*) in 1985. He later scored scene-stealing parts in movies by the Coen brothers and Jim Jarmusch, but it was Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*, in 1992, that introduced the world at large to his wide-eyed mania.

Since then, many of his finest characters, eclectic as they are, have brimmed with savvy skill, regardless of their questionable life choices. From *Con Air*'s big-brained mass-murderer Garland Greene to *Boardwalk Empire*'s gangster-politician Nucky Thompson, these are not men to be easily outsmarted. Last year, in Louis CK's confrontational, play-like web series *Horace And Pete*, he turned in a startling, vulnerable performance as the incisive but deeply troubled co-owner of a Brooklyn bar. And now, as a relentless Khrushchev, increasingly at wits' end, he's an Iannucci rage monster, ruthlessly clawing his way up the ranks. It's a blast. So, with our own misunderstanding behind us, we begin...

You've said it's important for you to put as much as yourself into characters as you can. But obviously Khrushchev is worlds away from you...
Well, yeah. I mean, I could not see myself playing the part, at all. I was so hung up on the physicality of it that I couldn't see past that.

Were you surprised when the role was offered to you?
Yeah. I thought, "Why me?" I didn't get it. When I first talked to Armando on the phone I was thinking, "How am I gonna handle telling him that I can't do this, that he's made a mistake, that I'm not the guy for this part?" But Armando had such a light touch about it — he said, "I really do see you playing this, if you're willing to shave your head." Because he wanted me to be bald. He said, "You don't have to look like the Khrushchev that people know from later on, this was Khrushchev from 1953." And it just made me feel better that Armando saw something in me that could play this guy, to stop thinking of him as this iconic character, and see who the human being was in there and how I related to that.

Khrushchev is a wily guy. What did you particularly like about him?
Well, what was appealing was all these guys were... if you got to be in Stalin's inner circle, it meant that you were very good at surviving! I think one of the ways Khrushchev did it was, he entertained Stalin. He was good at his job, but he hung in there and was able to get Stalin to like him, and play the fool a little bit. I don't think he consciously thought he'd be the one to take over, but he saw what needed to be done and went, "Well, if nobody else is gonna do this, I'll do it." As an actor it's a fascinating character to play, because on some levels he was very insecure and paranoid, but he had this innate toughness to him. He was able to stay the course and rise to it.

Were you a fan of Armando's earlier work?
I don't know his early UK work. I'm more familiar with *Veep* and I really liked *In The Loop* — I liked how it was unpredictable and surprising, where people you thought were allies ended up not being. People using each other.

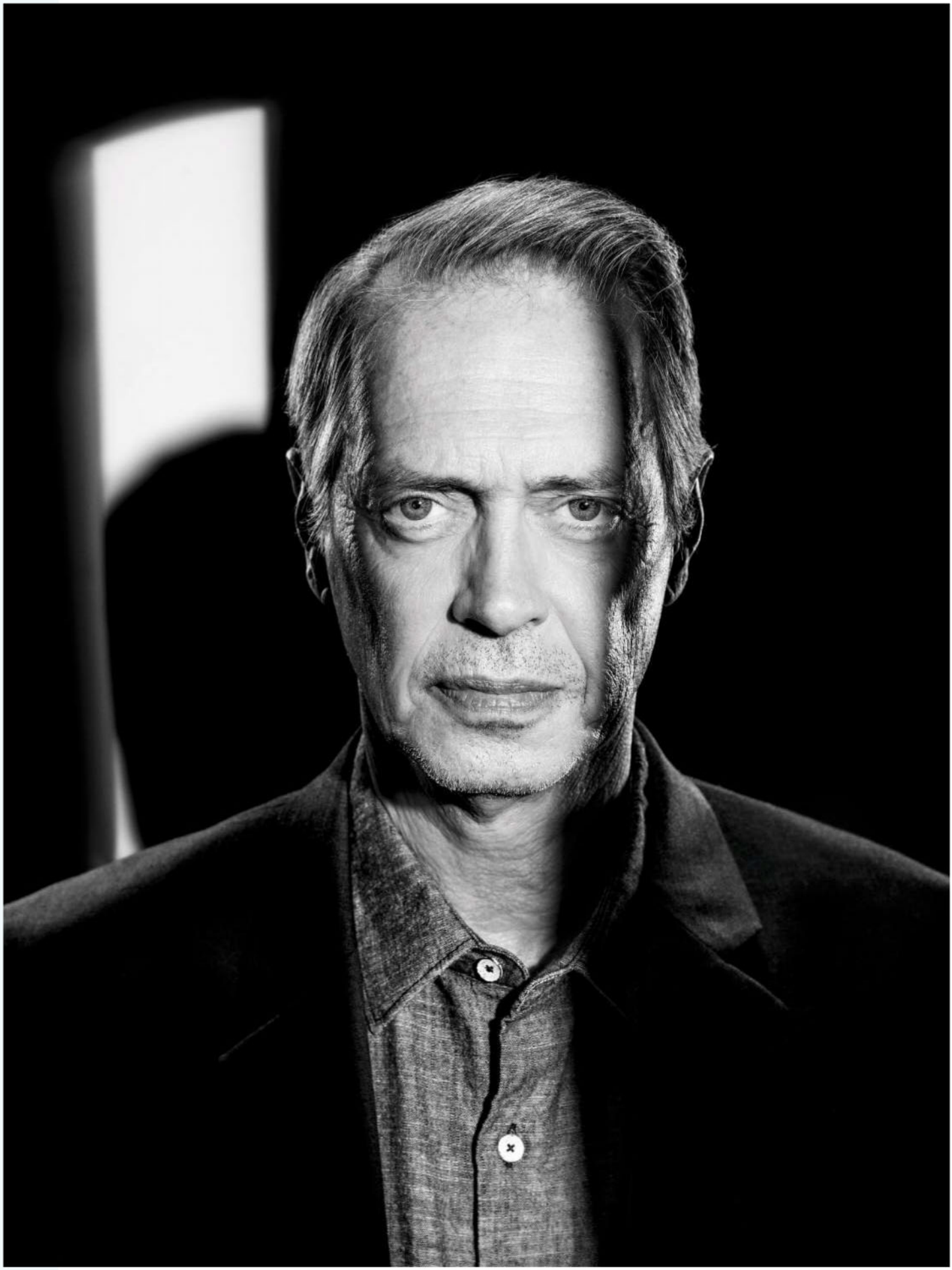
Have you seen Alan Partridge?
I've seen some of it, but I don't know the full Alan Partridge experience.

What was it like for you working with all those British comedians, including Michael Palin from *Monty Python* and Paul Whitehouse from *The Fast Show*?
Michael Palin, of course, I knew his work, and I was very, very nervous about getting to work with him, but he was the nicest guy, and so genuinely funny. I did not know Paul Whitehouse, because his work didn't travel over to the States. In the first few rehearsals I didn't know what I was dealing with — I was a little afraid of him! [*Laughs*] Because he's very in-your-face. He was very nice with me, but I didn't know what to make of him. Then I started to watch his stuff on YouTube.

Did you like it?
Oh, yeah. He's a really funny guy, and we hit it off. We became good buddies on set. I loved everybody — Jeffrey [Tambor], Simon [Russell Beale]. But it was a terrifying set to walk into. All that talent, and playing a part that I didn't feel — I didn't know if I was gonna be able to get it. We had two weeks of rehearsal, which was great, so I could stumble through it.

It's a very sweary film, but you've played a lot of foul-mouthed characters. Is that fun to do?
Yeah. When it's appropriate. I know I seem to get cast as a lot of... [*Laughs*] characters who have that language, but I don't like to do it when it doesn't feel organic. But with these characters, it kind of did. Because these guys were very gangsterish. It was a gang.

Speaking of gangs and swearing, 2017 is the 25th anniversary of *Reservoir Dogs*. It was Tarantino's first film — what was it like reading that script for the first time?
I thought it was written by a guy who had done 20 years in prison! Or ›



Grey suit by Brioni. Grey shirt by John Varvatos.

who was in that life. Somebody like Eddie Bunker, who played Mr Blue and wrote the book that [Ulu Grosbard's] *Straight Time* was based on. So I was surprised at how young Quentin was. When I was hanging out with him at the Sundance Lab — before we made the film some of the scenes were workshopped in Sundance — I asked him what research he did and how he knew about this stuff, and he said, "Just from watching other films." But he's that good. He knew every film, and that filtered through his imagination and he came up with his own version of the best caper film.

As well as being the only Dog to make it to the end of the film without getting shot, Mr Pink is funny as hell, with a proper mouth on him. Is it right, though, that you originally read for Mr Brown?
I read for Pink, and somebody else. I can't remember if it was Brown or Orange — they had everybody reading different parts. Mr Pink was the part that I really wanted.

Why?
That was the part I felt the most suited for. He had this intense, fast-talking energy, and he was funny. It was a part I really took a liking to.

We all know what Quentin's like now, but you had a virgin experience with him, no baggage. What was it like working with him?
Yeah, at Sundance it was basically Quentin and I and one other local actor. Just us. Quentin's energy was really inspiring. He was encouraged by certain filmmakers there who were the mentors, and others were trying to tell him that he had to be, essentially, more conventional. I was just excited that we were trying things out. He would do these long takes, and have the camera way across the room, and not cover it close. It was written like that in the script: "The camera stays on Mr White, Mr Pink is off-camera, you hear his voice, but the camera pushes in on Mr White." They tried to get him to cover the scene, like, "Okay, you've got this, how about now let's shoot Mr Pink's side of the dialogue?" And Quentin would say, "No, I'm not gonna use it. It says this is how it is." He had that confidence. I don't know where he got that from, but it was pretty amazing. It just felt like the film would be something I would really like. In tune with my sensibilities.

There was a 25th anniversary event at the Tribeca Film Festival last April. What was it like getting back together with everybody?
It was nice! It was the first time in a long time that the main cast was together in one place. We had two screenings, and both nights after the screenings everybody hung out. We wanted to be with each other. It's a weird business — you can go through something that intense and get to know people, and then if you don't live in the same state and you're not working with each other again, it just dissipates. So it was nice that when we were all together it just picked up again.

People often talk about that family element of filmmaking. Before you became an actor, you were a fireman; did you get that from that job too?
Yeah, it really is a brotherhood. Now also a sisterhood. You can't help but get close to the guys you work with. You spend a lot of time with them and you go through something very intense, when you do have a fire. Even if you don't like somebody, when you go through something like that together it just bonds you.

You became a fireman because your parents drummed certain values into you. You play a lot of working-class guys, and characters that exist on the fringes. How much do you think that came from your upbringing?
Oh, definitely it comes from my upbringing. I don't think of them as on the fringe, though. These are people. People that I know.

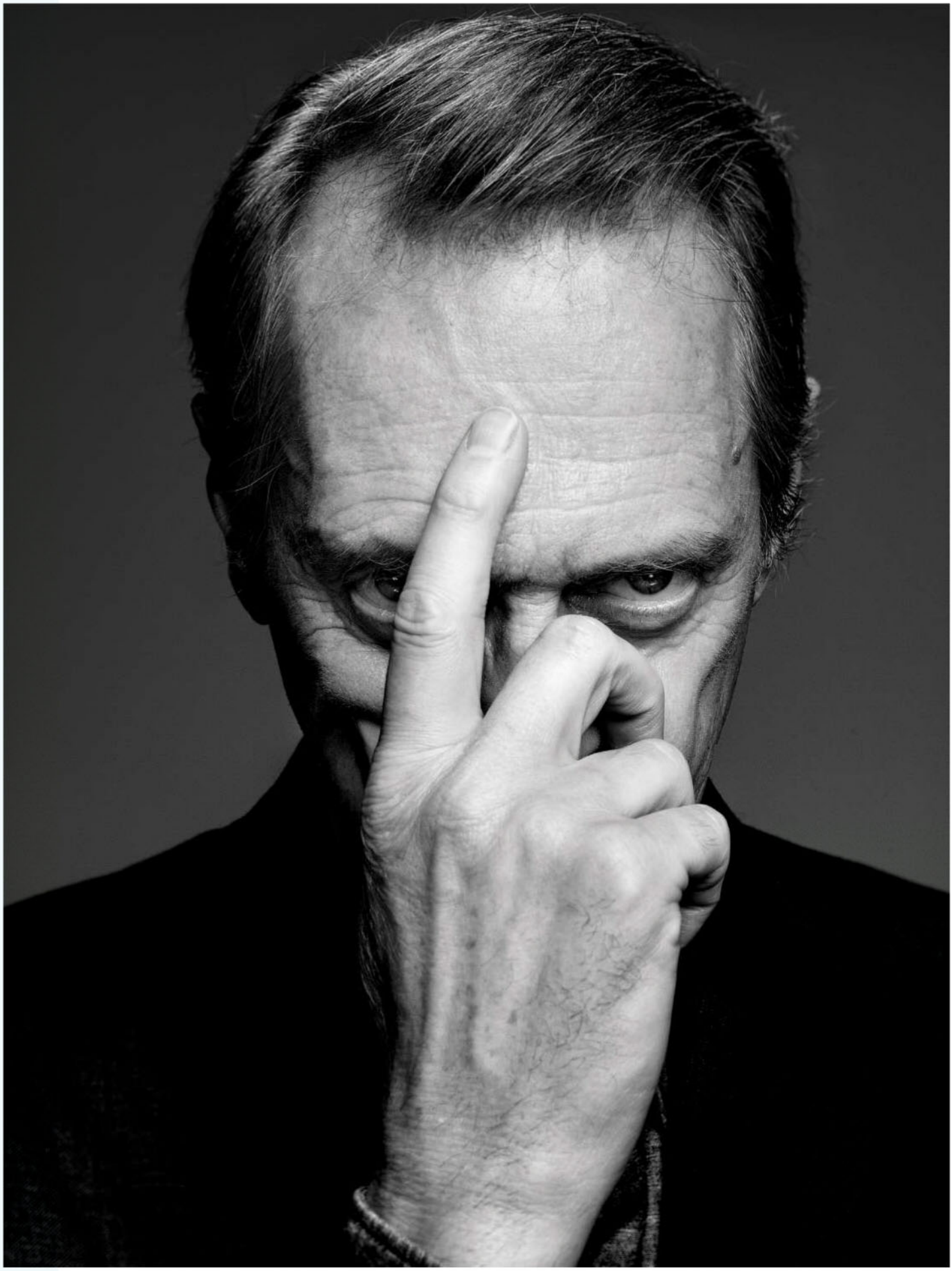
I guess I meant in terms of regular, mainstream movies.
Yeah, sure, in movie terms. But it's not like I'm looking to be a champion for the little guy, or the working class. It's just what I know. That's where I feel most comfortable. ›







From top: Buscemi shaved his head to play Nikita Khrushchev in Armando Iannucci's *The Death Of Stalin;* Seeing red as Mr Pink in *Reservoir Dogs* ("I'll show ya who you're fuckin' with!"); With Louis CK and Edie Falco on the acclaimed web series *Horace And Pete*.



***Horace And Pete* was very much in that vein. I wonder if Louis CK knew you would tap into that when he asked you to do it.**
He was certainly familiar with my work. I think he intrinsically knew that I would be game, and understand that world, yeah.

Pete's a really smart, sensitive guy, and your performance is so raw and honest. There's an incredible stillness to the show.
One of the things that Louis showed me right away was [Mike Leigh's] *Abigail's Party*, which is a very human piece. All that awkwardness and ugliness. And also it was not without compassion. You felt like this was a very compassionate but real-life portrait.

You say you don't set out to champion certain types of people. But in your episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?*, the BBC genealogy series, you said you're interested in the struggles of people's lives.
I just think there are so many stories worth telling of everyday people. Everybody's life is incredibly complicated — it's not smooth sailing for many people. To me that's interesting. How people just get through each day.

You explore that as a director, too. I love your second film, *Animal Factory* — Earl Copen (Willem Dafoe) is a wise old con, and his relationship with Ron Decker (Edward Furlong) is fascinating. Although as directorial material, it obviously wasn't close to home for you, like *Trees Lounge* was.
No. I could easily relate to Ron in the book, as somebody who maybe didn't have a lot of direction at a young age, and did a stupid thing and then was sent to prison, because of the tough drug laws at the time. So that was my way in. And that world fascinated me, that prison culture where you have to be part of something. It's hard to be a loner in prison unless you're the toughest guy there, otherwise you have to be in some group or gang, if you're there for a while. I found it to be so much more than a prison story — it's really a love story between this older convict who had seen it all and had made a very strong reputation for himself, and then decided to help this young kid and had no bones about being attracted to him. Even though he wasn't after sex. He kind of saw himself in this young guy, but it was also like, "He's a good-looking young guy and I want him to be my friend, and I'm gonna take care of him."

***Fargo*'s Carl Showalter was a big role for you, an amazing wise-ass who tries his hand at kidnapping, disastrously. When you read the script, did you instantly know how to play him?**
No. I was a bit nervous about it because I guess I saw this character as in the same vein as some others that I had played, although a lot better written. I'd done a lot of these low-budget films where I had played seedy guys, and I was trying to get away from that. And then come the Coen brothers. But I didn't know what I could do differently. I saw him as a guy wearing a fake leather maroon jacket, but then Mary Zophres, the costume designer, came up with this whole outfit I couldn't have imagined. And once I tried those clothes on and looked at myself in the mirror I knew who the guy was.

He's reprehensible, but funny too. Even your darkest characters can be really comical — it's telling that you started in stand-up.
Stand-up always intrigued me. I tried to do it for a while. But I felt like I couldn't find my own voice for it. I was much happier when I was acting with other people. The comedy was a way to break in, because a lot of people who later got sitcoms came out of doing stand-up.

One of your funniest characters is another Coen creation — poor, befuddled, innocent Donny from *The Big Lebowski*, basically the anti-Khrushchev. Is it true that before shooting you hit the lanes with John Turturro, aka Jesus Quintana?
Yeah. We knew we were doing the movie, and we live in the same neighbourhood, so we did go bowling.

Did you bowl in character?
No.

***THE DEATH OF STALIN* IS IN CINEMAS FROM 20 OCTOBER**







From top: Buscemi discovers his great-great-grandfather was a dentist and Civil War soldier in the BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are?*; As *Fargo*'s quick-fire kidnapper, Carl Showalter; Hitting the lanes as Theodore Donald 'Donny' Kerabatsos in *The Big Lebowski*.

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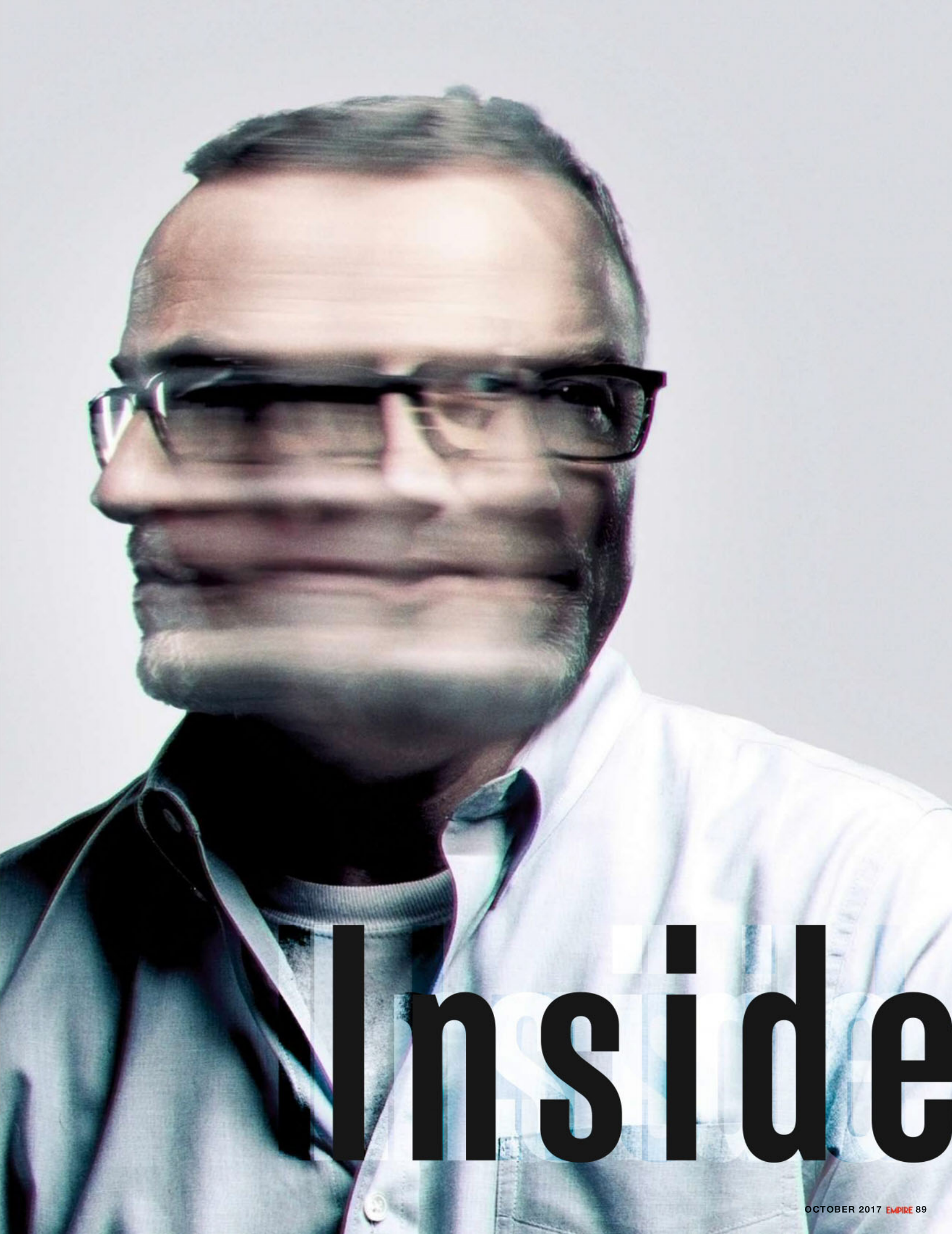
PHOTOGRAPHER ASSISTED BY GRANT FLANAGAN. STYLING: ISLE WHITE AT BA REPS, ASSISTED BY JORGE LOBOS VEGA. GROOMING: ELISA FLOWERS AT BA REPS USING ORIBE HAIR CARE AND MAKE UP FOR EVER.

The Killers

WORDS **NEV PIERCE** PORTRAITS **MARIUS BUGGE** DIGITAL IMAGING **JUSTIN METZ**

DIRECTOR DAVID FINCHER'S OBSESSION WITH SERIAL KILLERS BROUGHT US *SEVEN* AND *ZODIAC*. NOW HE'S RETURNING TO THE SUBJECT AGAIN WITH *MINDHUNTER*, THIS TIME AIMING TO GET INSIDE THEIR MINDS LIKE NO-ONE HAS BEFORE





Inside

"I DON'T WANT WHOEVER DID THIS KILLED," SAYS DAVID FINCHER, "BUT I DO WANT A DIGIT."







It's a crisp September morning in 2016 and the 54-year-old director is standing amid his crew in the lobby of a police station in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, doubling for the late '70s Adairsville Police Department, Georgia. He's brandishing his new show's "sides" in his hand: the day's script pages, which have been stapled together in the wrong order. "Okay, we're almost ready," he calls out, unpicking staples. "Bring in the master thespians!"

Moments later, the lead actors of *MINDHUNTER* walk across the room's sapphire-tiled floor, past a cigarette machine and a wall plastered with "Wanted" posters. Holt McCallany wears cropped hair around a handsome pitbull face, a short-sleeved white shirt over an imposing frame and a conservative (for the '70s) tie. He is senior FBI agent Bill Tench, based loosely on the late Robert Ressler, a pioneer of psychological profiling. And he looks like a hammer in search of a nail. But when he stops beside Fincher he's quiet, deferential: "David, can I ask you a question?"

McCallany's co-star Jonathan Groff strides in behind — bounds really, except that implies a lack of elegance. He wears a powder-blue shirt, trim grey trousers and a sunbeam face that suggests this isn't just a job: it's an adventure. He's Holden Ford, also loosely based on a real agent, John Douglas, from whose book the Netflix series finds its inspiration: *Mindhunter: Inside The FBI's Elite Serial Crime Unit*. Douglas was on the bleeding edge of investigation: talking to incarcerated serial killers to get insight into their instincts and then help police with live enquiries. These were G-men becoming amateur psychologists.

It was this angle that first intrigued Fincher, a director who has long been fascinated by serial killers but had never seen their psyches explored in this way. "It was the fact that this massive crime-fighting bureaucracy was engaging with this kind of criminal behaviour on the level of, 'Let's understand it,'" he explains. "That was interesting."

The scene about to be shot will in a way encapsulate the thrust of the whole show. Holden is explaining to a local police officer how he intends to question a suspect in the murder of a young girl. He's going to try to get the guy to open up, he's going to try to understand him, he may even seem like he *sympathises* with him. The gist: things are going to get *weird*.

Cameras roll, the exchange plays and at its close the cop turns to Tench, a bit bemused: "All this an FBI thing?" The weary reply comes: "It's *his* thing."

"Cut!" calls Fincher. "Moving on!" There's a pause, from shock. Then laughter, as it dawns upon cast and crew that their director — not exactly known for being shy of repeating takes — is taking the piss. As detail-orientated as any FBI profiler, Fincher is hardly going to rush through a scene as nuanced as this. Walking over to the monitor, he says, "Okay, play that back. Let me see everything that was fucked up about it."



Above: *Seven*, *Zodiac*, and Fincher (right) on set of *Gone Girl*. **Above right:** *MINDHUNTER*'s Holden Ford (Jonathan Groff) and Bill Tench (Holt McCallany). **Here:** And with training chief Shepard (Cotter Smith).





THE LIST OF things that are "fucked up" about *MINDHUNTER* would be quite extensive. It is dealing in the most depraved and violent of human behaviour. Grubbiness is nothing new, of course, for its primary director and executive producer. But Fincher's return to Netflix — after launching *House Of Cards* back in 2013 — could be an evolution in terms of his storytelling, as at its core it's more rooted in character than anything he's done before. (Fincher directed four of the ten episodes, with the others shot by Dane Tobias Lindholm (*A Hijacking*) and Brits Andrew Douglas (*U Want Me 2 Kill Him?*) and Asif Kapadia (*Senna*).) He describes it as being about "the moments between moments", as opposed to the rat-tat-tat plot machinations of crime procedurals on screens big or small.

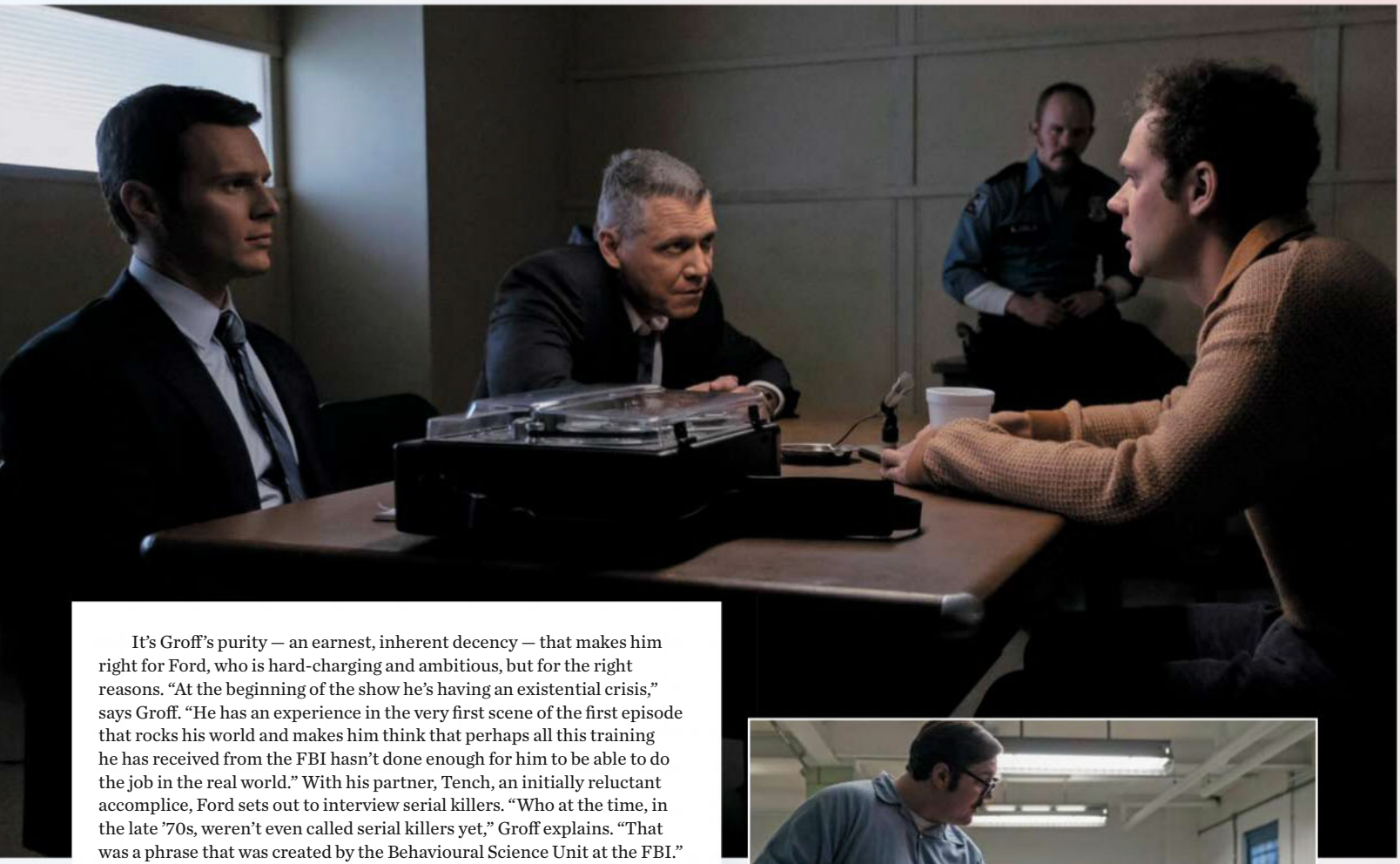
"It's a much more theatrical presentation," he reflects. "It's a lot of sitting at a table with a guy in manacles, trying to get him to tell you what was going through his head when he did the most inhuman things to another entity you can possibly imagine."

The time the show will take to explore behaviour — to get inside the heads of its killers — is one thing that made it different enough from Fincher's previous sorties into the serial-killer subgenre to warrant engagement. It was Charlize Theron, acting as a producer, who brought him the book and, after a false start with another writer, introduced him to Joe Penhall, whom she knew from *The Road*. Penhall wrote a pilot and a series bible, which took true cases but fictionalised the investigators to a degree that gave dramatic licence and shape to the show. Of course from *Seven* to *Zodiac* to *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, Fincher has dealt with more than his fair share of successive slaughters. The interest may stem from his youth. His dad was a journalist, his mum a mental-health nurse, and conversations about killers weren't infrequent at home.

"There were a lot of serial killers in the '70s," he remembers. "And we probably talked about most of them. My mom would come down much more on the notion of rehabilitation and my dad would be like, 'Once you understand what's really going on, you probably have less empathy than you would going in.' So that might have been what made *MINDHUNTER* appealing. Then again, whenever I can blame my parents, that's my default."

"I THINK PART of the intrigue of the show is watching something that we're familiar with slowly get built and come together," says Jonathan Groff. "You really see this spark of an idea in somebody's brain."

As much as we now take the idea of psychological profiling for granted, back in the '70s it was new. In that sense, while *MINDHUNTER* is about murder, it bears some thematic comparison to Fincher's BAFTA-winning *The Social Network*, in that it is also about invention. Fincher knew Groff from that, in fact, rather than any of his TV work ("I know this is gonna shock you," says the director, "but I've never seen *Glee*"). The actor — who would go on to be a sensation as King George in Broadway smash *Hamilton*, and can currently be heard on inventive divorce-com podcast *36 Questions* — had auditioned to play entrepreneur Sean Parker (a part that eventually went to Justin Timberlake). "He could have acted the shit out of it," says Fincher. "But he has absolutely no venality." ›



It's Groff's purity — an earnest, inherent decency — that makes him right for Ford, who is hard-charging and ambitious, but for the right reasons. "At the beginning of the show he's having an existential crisis," says Groff. "He has an experience in the very first scene of the first episode that rocks his world and makes him think that perhaps all this training he has received from the FBI hasn't done enough for him to be able to do the job in the real world." With his partner, Tench, an initially reluctant accomplice, Ford sets out to interview serial killers. "Who at the time, in the late '70s, weren't even called serial killers yet," Groff explains. "That was a phrase that was created by the Behavioural Science Unit at the FBI."

THE FIRST TWO initials of the unit's name summed up the attitude of many people to the work the BSU did. Holt McCallany's character is caught between the old and new school: he has been shocked and hardened by the brutality and banality of evil, but can see the value in trying new ways to catch killers. It's deft casting. McCallany has had a know-the-face character career built on playing toughs, probably peaking as a dementia-addled boxer in FX's *Lights Out*. But Fincher has known him more than 25 years, having cast him in *Alien 3* and *Fight Club*, and sees the sensitivity and humour beneath the teak veneer — a depth that *MINDHUNTER* will exploit as the show goes on.

"My guy, Tench, doesn't have the same degree of empathy for the killers that Jonathan's character often displays, but he's got a curious mind and he's a good detective," says McCallany. The same applies to the actor himself. His question for Fincher on set was not unusual — he is a relentless inquisitor of his directors. "The serial killer will murder you and desecrate your corpse. But the serial question-asker will bore you to death over many long months of filming."

The "third leg of the tripod", in Fincher's words, is Anna Torv as Dr Wendy Carr, a psychologist who sees a huge opportunity in what Tench and Ford are doing: the chance to really understand what creates killers. "She really wants to put a fire under them to make it a legit study," says Torv, who you may recognise as an FBI agent herself, albeit investigating the paranormal in *Fringe*. For *MINDHUNTER* Torv read extensively and "kind of went down the rabbit hole — everything's so accessible on the internet", to the point where she had to consciously pull back, because the horrific nature of the crimes left her feeling "vulnerable". Still, she had to try to see the material through the eyes of her character, who has an enormous amount of empathy. "Because you look back at the history," says Torv, "and not one of [the killers] had a really beautiful childhood and then decided they were gonna go out and bludgeon someone to death."

The cast have clearly been chewing over questions of morality — the nature of evil; the possibility of reformation, if not redemption. "The thing that really struck me the most is that it's so easy to write people off as good or evil," says Groff (who Fincher describes, not inaccurately, as "the sweetest man who ever lived"). "But after spending almost a year in Pittsburgh sitting and listening to these people's stories, you just get involved in the complexity of all of it."

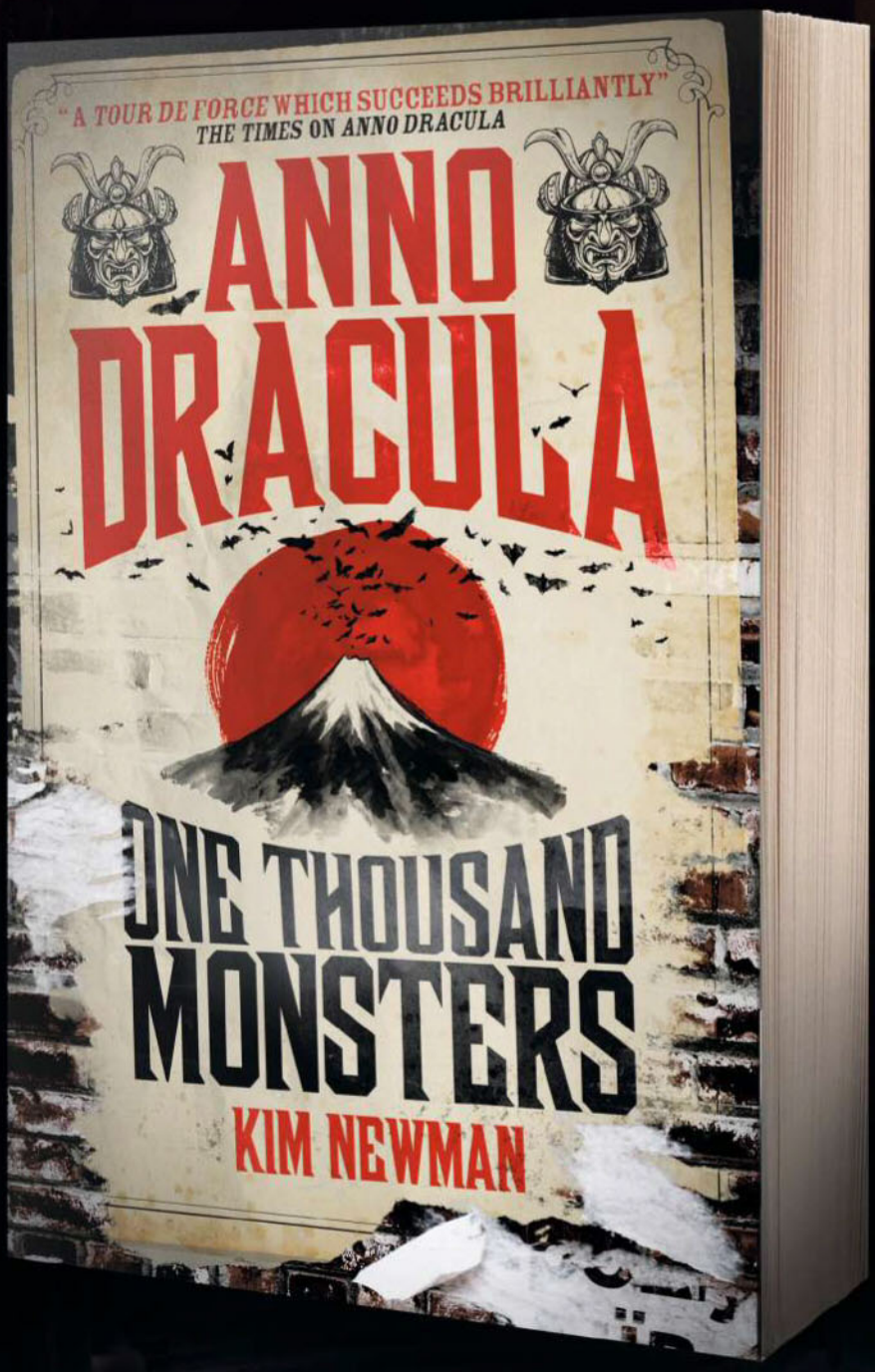


Top: Ford and Tench get to grips with Behavioural Science techniques. **Above:** Serial murderer Edmund Kemper (Cameron Britton) gets a little close for comfort with Ford.

McCallany, perhaps in keeping with his character, seems less ambiguous about the potential rehabilitation of these people — though it's striking how no-one involved in the show seems completely certain in their views. "I was at [FBI Academy] Quantico and I met some of the guys that are currently in the Behavioural Science Unit, what they now call the Behavioural Analysis Unit," he recalls. "If you ask the guys in law enforcement [about rehabilitation], the analogy they often give is, 'Imagine you're baking a cake. The cake has eggs and it has flour and milk and sugar and a lot of perfectly normal ingredients. But imagine just before you put the cake in the oven some motor oil spilled into the batter. Well, when that cake comes out of the oven, is it possible now to remove the motor oil? It's not.' And that's what they think." ›

'COMPULSORY READING...GLORIOUS'

NEIL GAIMAN ON *ANNO DRACULA*

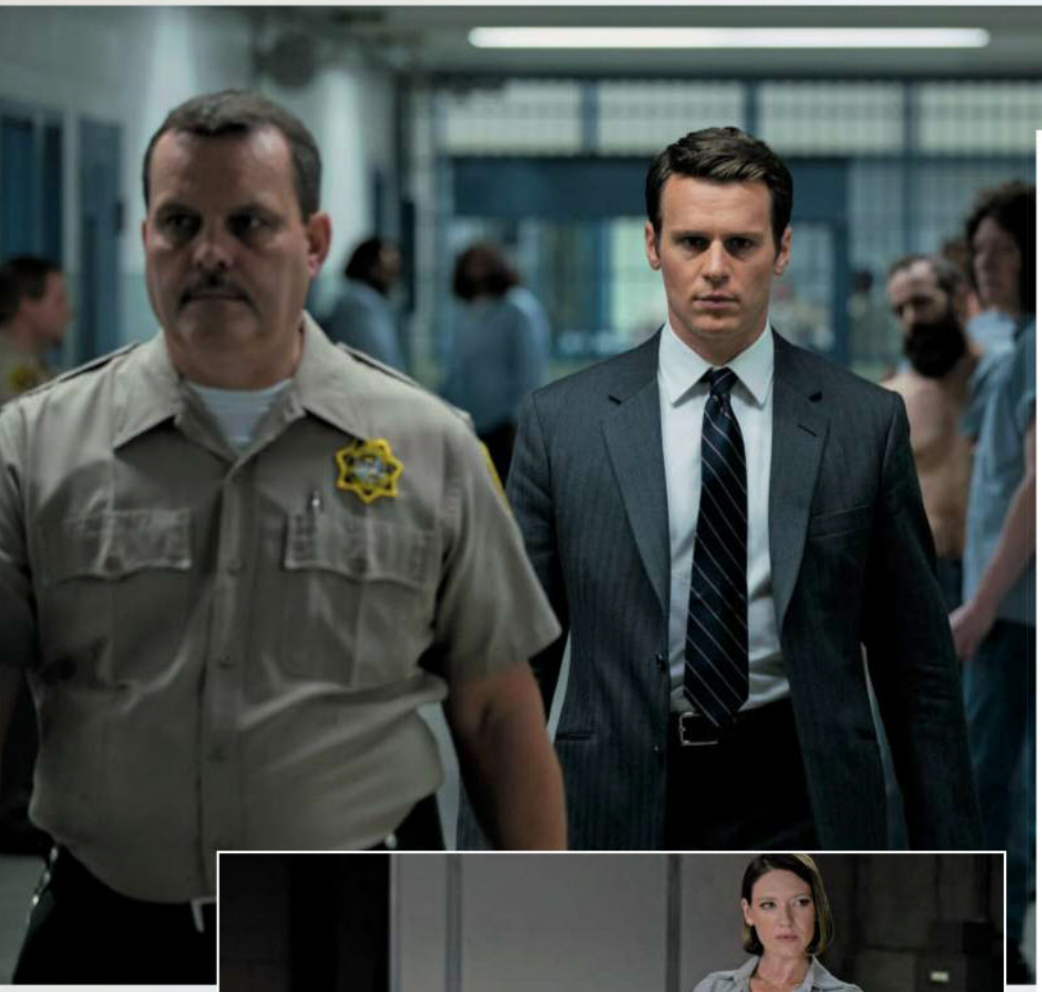


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THERE MAY BE no cure, but perhaps there can be prevention. That's part of what drove the work of Douglas and Ressler. Visiting Quantico, Fincher walked down into a basement and came face-to-face with a life-size mannequin of Hannibal Lecter: the ultimate serial-killer icon. "*The Silence Of The Lambs* was a huge recruitment tool," says the director, who, when asked by his FBI guides what he wanted to do with *MINDHUNTER,* told them he wanted to strip away the super-villainy of serial killers.

"I feel like Dennis Rader ['The BTK Killer'] is a lot of things, Gary Ridgway ['The Green River Killer'] is a lot of things, Richard Ramirez ['The Night Stalker'] is a lot of things," he says. "But they're not gourmands. We want to show these people as they really are, which is quite sad and human. Even though the aspect of them that they're keeping hidden is this intensely subhuman part."

It's an attitude you might not expect from the man who once put Gwyneth Paltrow's head in a box. But there's empathy here. Recalls Fincher: "Jeffrey Dahmer [cannibal, necrophiliac and murderer of 17 people] said, 'I'm sexually aroused by seeing people's insides.'" He pauses, before adding wryly. "Okay, well, there's not a lot of clubs for that... Suntan lotion and beer and bubblegum and automobiles are sold by cleavage, they're sold by abs — there's this commingling of our sexual impulse in almost every kind of communication. If that doesn't work for you, what must the world be like? I mean, I've seen the crime-scene photographs from Jeffrey Dahmer. He was a subhuman. And yet you can't help but listen to him and go, 'Was there a chance had we gotten there earlier?'"

Not that the empathy extends eternally. "I like to think of myself as a liberal," says Fincher. "And yet there are definitely moments where I find myself going, 'Give me a backhoe and some quicklime and let's stop worrying about the appeals process.'" It's this push-me, pull-me within the makers which will power the show. "We need to find justification," says Torv. "We want there to be a reasonable explanation, because if there isn't then that's fucking frightening. I think that's part of the question of the show." Fincher is interested in what makes us tick — and what makes us sick. "Before this time at the FBI the attitude was 'These people are rabid dogs, they're beneath our contempt.' I thought it was interesting that somebody said, 'Maybe, but the difference between them and rabid dogs is you can talk to them.'"

Douglas, in his book, reaches a perhaps surprising conclusion for someone who spent so much time talking to murderers and has seen such horror: "I truly believe that along with more money and police and prisons, what we most need more of is love. This is not being simplistic; it's at the very heart of the issue."

Seeing killers as broken people, rather than faceless monsters, was part of what the FBI learned to do, in a bid to stop more killing. What creates killers, how can it be stopped, what potential evils do we have inside us? *MINDHUNTER* is asking difficult questions. "It is also entirely salacious!" says Fincher. "Let's not kid ourselves. But hopefully we're going to be dealing with the things that make us similar as opposed to the things that separate us."

It's not that everyone is capable of great evil, of course — at least not on the scale of the psychosexual sadists in *MINDHUNTER*. But there's great fascination in exploring the darkness in people's hearts. And a career in it, too. Back in Pittsburgh — on a break from shooting outside a high-rise apartment block — the director is showing *Empire* how his new camera works and we're nodding and smiling and pretending to understand, when a resident comes over to say she's a fan. Fincher smiles. "It's always nice to know there are pervs out there!" She laughs. "We keep you in business!"

"That's true," says Fincher. "Without pervs I'd be nothing."

MINDHUNTER IS ON NETFLIX FROM 13 OCTOBER

Top: Ford walks the prison halls. **Above:** Tench is joined by Dr Wendy Carr (Anna Torv), *MINDHUNTER*'s "third leg" according to Fincher.

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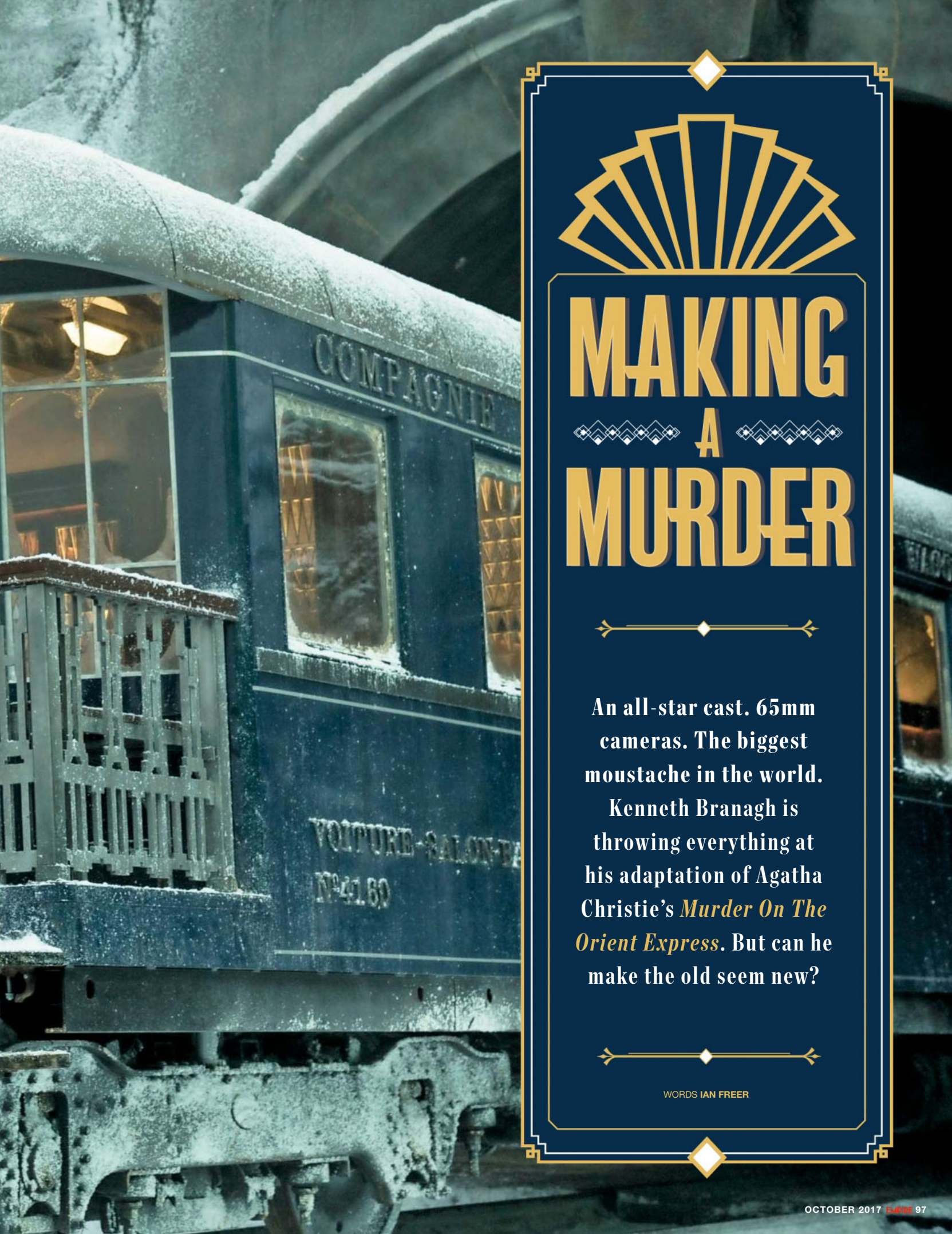
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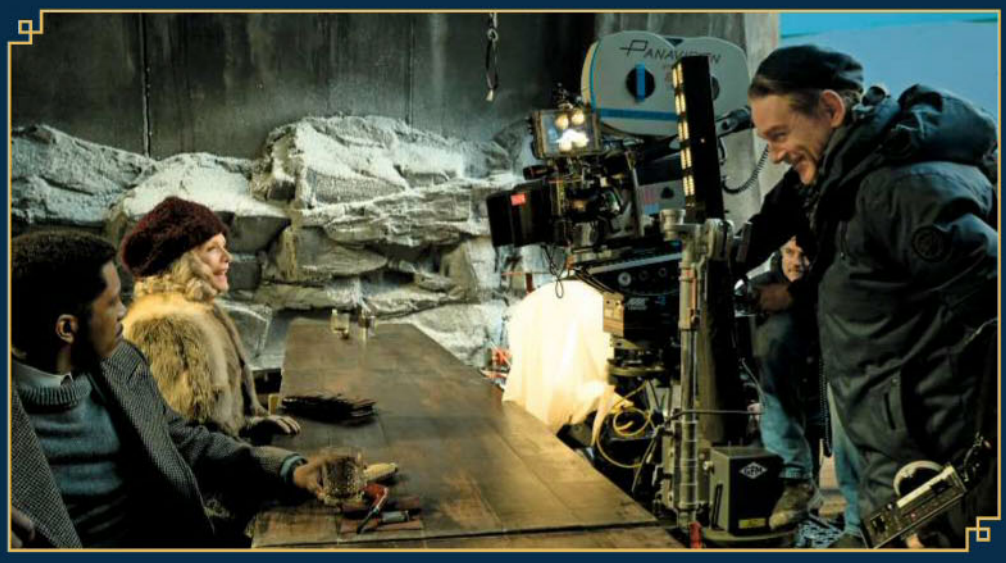




MAKING A MURDER

An all-star cast. 65mm cameras. The biggest moustache in the world. Kenneth Branagh is throwing everything at his adaptation of Agatha Christie's *Murder On The Orient Express*. But can he make the old seem new?

WORDS **IAN FREER**







Clockwise from left: Josh Gad as Hector MacQueen; Kenneth Branagh framing Leslie Odom Jr (Dr Arbuthnot) and Michelle Pfeiffer (Caroline Hubbard); Mary Debenham (Daisy Ridley), Hildegarde Schmidt (Olivia Colman) and Princess Dragomiroff (Judi Dench); Arbuthnot takes aim; Johnny Depp as Edward Ratchett.

When you think Agatha Christie, what comes to mind? Your grandparents' bookshelf? Bad local 'theatre'? Sunday nights on ITV after *The X-Factor*? If so, director-producer-star Kenneth Branagh wants to throw your preconceptions on the tracks. *Murder On The Orient Express*, based on Christie's landmark 1934 whodunnit, sees Belgian detective Hercule Poirot (Branagh) interrogate 13 suspects following the murder of shady American businessman Samuel Edward Ratchett (Johnny Depp) aboard the luxurious train. It's a story as old as the Alps — Sidney Lumet delivered an okay-ish all-star version in 1974 — but Branagh is shooting for a vision that is big and bold, feeling both classic and contemporary. Like Poirot minus his newly titanic 'tache, *Empire* grills Branagh and *the* cast of 2017 to solve a mystery: how do you adapt an 83-year-old page-turner for the IMAX crowd?

THE DETECTIVE

Kenneth Branagh (Hercule Poirot/director): Having played Wallander, I was so interested to play a detective who, by contrast, was happy. His association with violent crime takes its toll, but Poirot has an absolute determination to leave that world any time he can, to thrive in his delight in cake or travel. I get the feeling that if he didn't have to solve another crime in his life, he'd be overjoyed.

Willem Dafoe (furtive academic Gerhard Hardman): As Poirot, Ken drives the investigation. And as director, Ken drives the shoot. So the parallel is very close.

Penélope Cruz (Spanish missionary Pilar Estravados): To see him go from fiction to reality back and forth, a thousand times in one day, it's mindblowing to watch. He was 100 per cent there for you as Poirot, 100 per cent there for you as your director.

Branagh: I am nothing like Poirot. I am the kind of person who never guesses the murderer unless they tell me. I am sure *Empire* readers were well ahead of me with *The Usual Suspects*: "He read it all on the fucking board!" I remember those reveal moments as really pleasurable, but I am never quicker than the filmmakers.

THE MURDER

Branagh: At the centre of the story, you needed someone who you might believe someone would stoop to murder. So Johnny Depp as Edward Ratchett becomes a helpful thing in the narrative — a star personality. This character is someone who really creates a lot of space around him. He takes up a lot of oxygen.

Josh Gad (private secretary Hector MacQueen): MacQueen and Ratchett's butler Masterman [Derek Jacobi] see things that are sometimes questionable and are protectors of his image. There's a sense that everybody on this train knows more than they're letting on.







Cruz: The movie is very entertaining but there are layers of real pain for these characters. Pilar is a missionary who is very damaged from something that happened in her past. She lives with guilt, but does it make her a killer? The film poses the idea: is revenge ever justified? When movies are good, they make you ask yourself interesting questions.

THE SUSPECTS

Gad: In 1934, the train would have had a very specific, Euro-centric feel to it. But Ken threw all that away and so in our version there is more than that. There are people of different colours, different religions.

Branagh: I cast step-by-step, individual by individual, and then it added up to something in the end. I started with the princess. I knew I wanted Judi to do that.

Judi Dench (imperious grande dame Princess Natalia Dragomiroff): Princess Dragomiroff has two very, very nice dogs.

Gad: When I first met Judi, I said, "Forget Dame Judi Dench — it's DAMN Judi Dench."

Branagh: So you start with her and think, "I need someone who could share the screen with Dame Judi Dench." Olivia Colman has been on such a rich vein of form across the past four or five years. I had an instinct that was a great pairing. I just went on like that.

Michelle Pfeiffer (brash widow Caroline Hubbard): Caroline is travelling alone and is very curious, maybe a little bit too curious. The rumour is she is hunting for a husband. Lauren Bacall played her in the 1974 version. I asked Ken if he thought watching it would be helpful. He said he would rather we didn't.

Daisy Ridley (governess Mary Debenham): Mary is travelling to Baghdad. Mary Debenham is such a good name. It's hilarious. I was on holiday last summer and somebody asked me if I was Daisy Ridley and I said, "No," and had to quickly think of a name. So I said, "Linda Debenham." I had literally just got the role.

Leslie Odom Jr (honourable combat veteran Dr Arbuthnot): My character is a World War I veteran, and let's just say that love is keeping him on the train.

Gad: I think there are multiple ideas in this film that are absolutely relevant to what we are witnessing today. With Willem Dafoe's character, you get the idea of prejudice that comes with the outsider. The rise of nationalism. This sense of pride in country. The rise of fascism is happening at that time and I think we unfortunately see reflections in the past happening again in the present. We were very cognisant of that because, while we were shooting, Brexit happened, Trump was elected. It becomes a part of the fabric of the story that you are telling.

Dafoe: My guy is an Austrian professor of engineering, going to Turin to give a paper about the military uses of Bakelite. He is wound pretty tight. If I was watching this movie, I would suspect him pretty early.

Olivia Colman (Dragomiroff's maid Hildegarde Schmidt): My husband didn't know who did it. I ruined it for him.

THE TRAIN

Branagh: I knew I wanted to give it some scope. When I got involved, I said, "Let's not have a snow drift, let's have an avalanche. Let's maroon them in this place." The murderer is not getting away. We wanted to make the wide-open spaces intimidating, so you understand there is a primitive desire to stay in a warm space. Which turns out to be a dangerous space. ›

Ridley: There was a full train built on scaffolding for the avalanche, which was *uh-maze-ing*.
Branagh: A real train up on a real viaduct with all these actors getting on helped create a tingle quality. I was shooting with the last four 65mm Panavision cameras in the world, to take people on a journey in the Golden Age of travel. The depth of colour and the quality of the definition of the image is so extraordinary. I had just been on *Dunkirk* [playing a navy commander], had done it before myself [1996's *Hamlet*] and I knew it made cinema an event. So much of our crime drama is on television and I wanted this to feel different.
Tom Bateman (railway director Monsieur Bouc): There was a fully moving, 22-ton locomotive, plus tender and four carriages, that went along a mile of track laid down at Longcross Studios. The leafy lanes of Surrey became the former Yugoslavia — that was quite amazing. If you've ever tried to ply people with Champagne on a moving train, it's not easy.
Branagh: For the scenery outside the windows, we went to New Zealand and Switzerland with a second unit and shot hours of footage. This was then digitally stitched together and played on [2,500] LED screens wrapped around each carriage. Hydraulics and air bellows beneath the carriages gave the illusion of movement.
Gad: It was almost too real. You are on a train that has the motion. You have these moving images surrounding you. At first it is a very strange sensation. But also a really incredible asset.
Derek Jacobi (impeccable butler Masterman): The first time they did the images going by, it was a bit vomit-making.
Branagh: There was a moment when we were filming where there was a little break but the screens were still running. I went down to one end of the train just to see the scenery passing like you would on a real train. It was funny to find myself doing that but I wasn't the only one. There was an immersive thing immediately.
Gad: There was a very big resolve on Ken's part not to confine the action to the train. I think part of what he loves about the story is the claustrophobia. But some of the vista shots we were shooting have a David Lean quality. Nobody does this kind of filmmaking anymore — taking the time to exquisitely frame a shot. There is a sense that Kenneth will take the old and make it new again. It doesn't feel dusty.
Branagh: A film that influenced me is Scorsese's *The Age Of Innocence*. I finished that film and was awestruck by the sense that I had been in 19th-century New York, that I knew the art, smelled the flowers, felt the linen tableclothes. I also looked at John Ford's *The Searchers*. I was always stripping things away, clearing things out. You'll probably find less clutter in our Orient Express than on the real one.
Gad: I have just taken the ride on the actual Orient Express. It has a piano. The food is all Michelin-rated. There is a call button. Each cabin has a butler. You do queue for the loo but you never have to wait in line. The only problem is there are no showers so you have to come prepared.

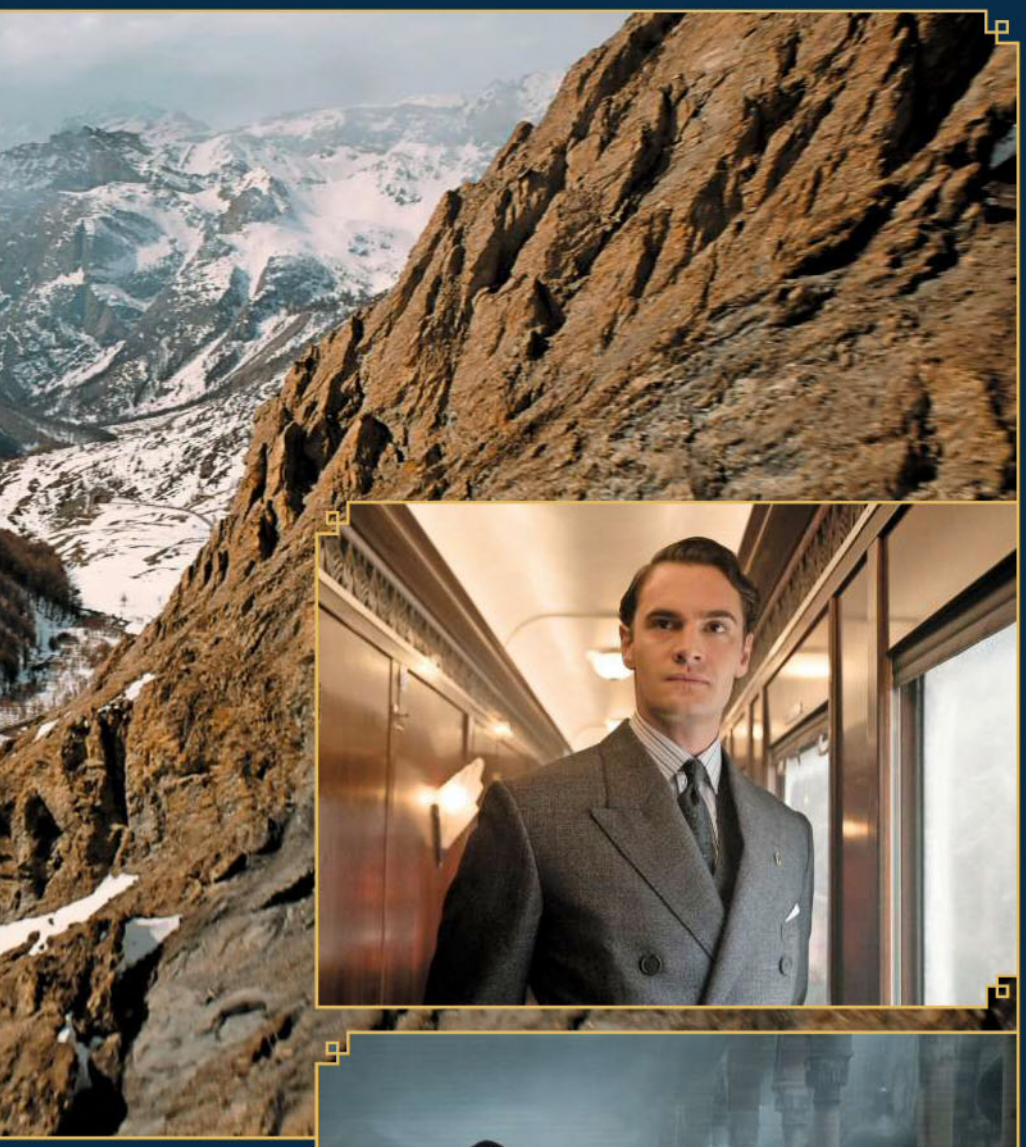


Clockwise from left: Swiss rolling in the mountains — "Let's have an avalanche, let's maroon people in this place"; Tom Bateman as M Bouc; Pilar Estravados (Penélope Cruz) gets ready to board; Derek Jacobi as Masterman; The too-curious Mrs Hubbard.

THE MOUSTACHE

Branagh: We knew the moustache would be a thing because it was a thing for Christie. She really does have every character respond to it. There are 15 easy-to-find quotes about how she regards the moustache, which is usually "immense', "magnificent" or "majestic". It is the one thing Christie and her husband found a little bit disappointing about the '74 version.
Colman: The Poirot we grew up with — David Suchet — had a tiny, thin, black moustache. Now all I see is Ken. Piercing blue eyes and massive 'tache — that is the only Poirot for me.
Lucy Boynton (mysterious noblewoman Countess Andrenyi): We saw it on the mannequin heads in the make-up truck and it was pretty substantial. And then you see it on Ken's face and it is even more impactful.
Pfeiffer: It was a little distracting in the beginning. I went, "Whoa! Okay! That's an effect!" But you forget about it. He manages to make it completely believable and very sexy.
Branagh: Poirot can hide behind the moustache. But also, when people mock it or ridicule it or dismiss it, they underestimate him and









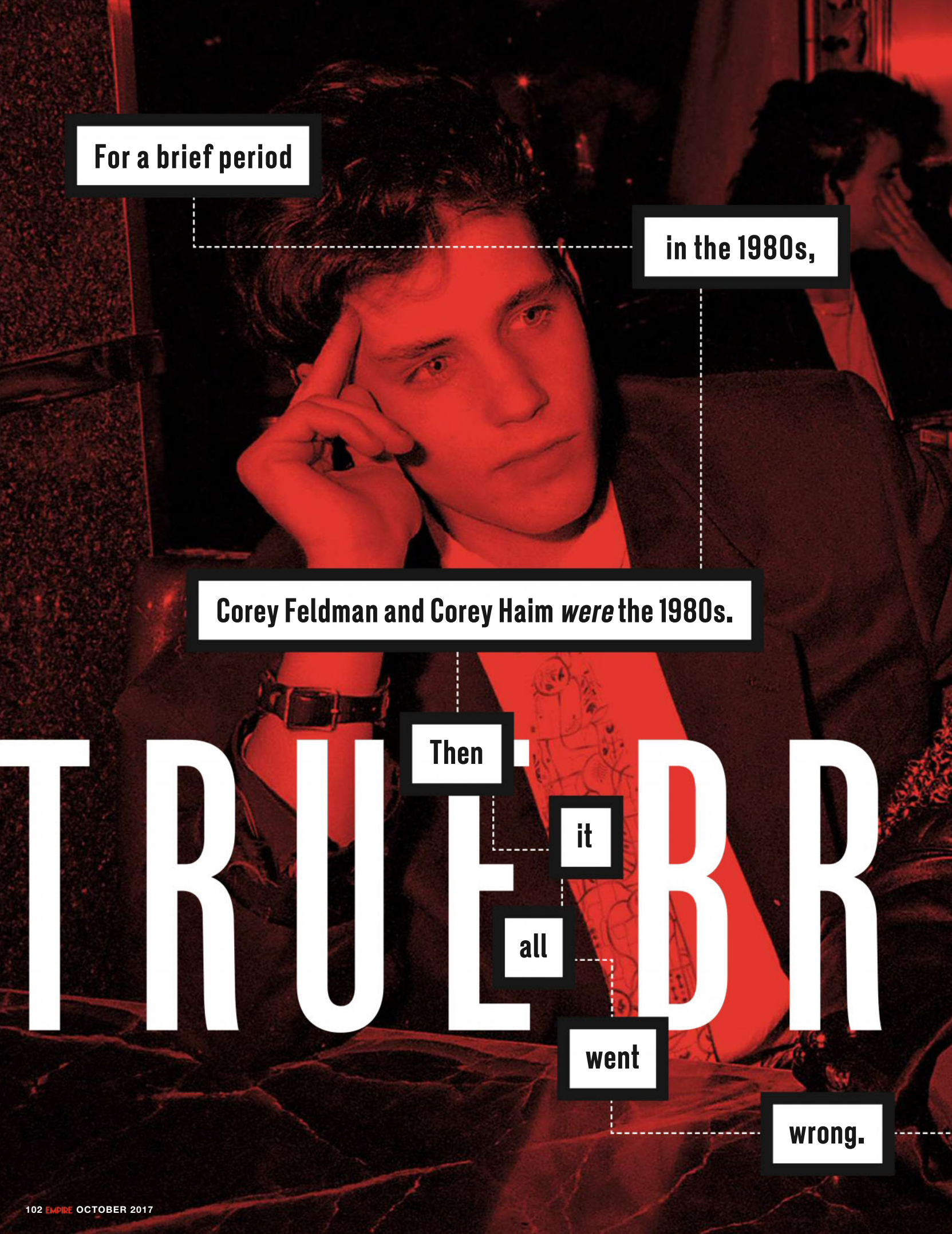


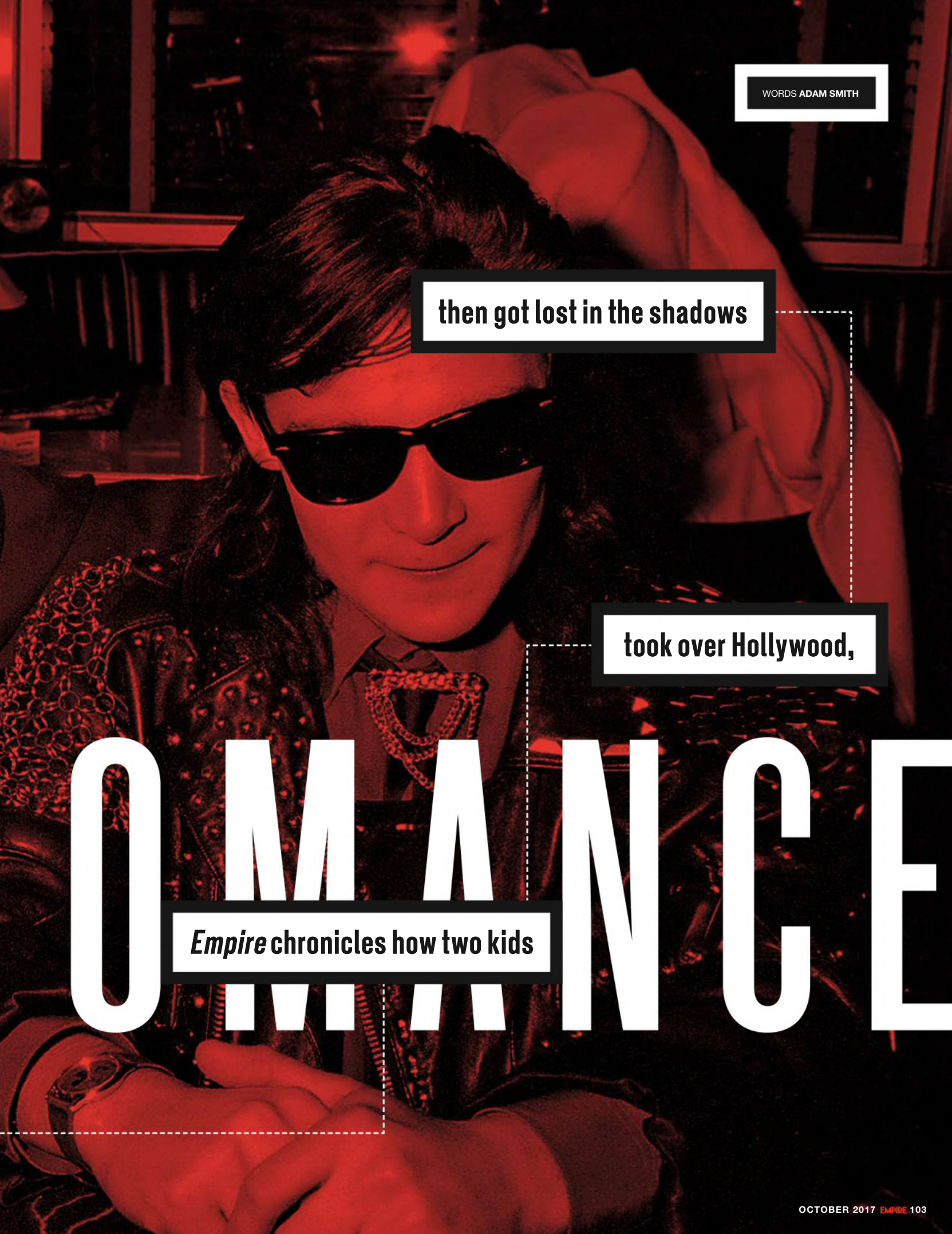
therefore his job as a detective becomes simpler.
Marwan Kenzari (train conductor Pierre Michel): If Ken laughed in the scene, you would see him trying to stop himself ruining the beautiful moustache. So that became very funny, trying to find out how to make him laugh.
Cruz: I just had to laugh for ten minutes at the beginning of the day. When he arrived I was like, "Waaaaah!" He told me he has a trailer just for his moustache. Every day I saw him was so funny. First the moustache walked in, then him.

THE DOWNTIME

Dench: What was very extraordinary is that we were all together. It's not like a film where you are all in different bits.
Colman: The train was the green room. We only got off when they made us get off.
Pfeiffer: Josh Gad is hilarious. He'd start doing Penélope Cruz impersonations. Then he would start in on Javier [Bardem, Cruz's husband].
Gad: It was like camp. Everybody had this sense of playfulness. I remember Ken playing Shakespeare trivia with us. Of course, Derek and Judi killed everybody. I felt so incompetent because they can quote Shakespeare. But I can quote *The Goonies*. Ken, Derek and Judi don't know Sloth's dialogue: "SLOTH LOVES CHUNK!"
Ridley: I learnt backgammon. Derek did his crossword every day. He is really good at crosswords.
Cruz: I showed the entire cast how to play Werewolves. I have a team in Madrid and a team in LA where our leader is Leonardo DiCaprio. You have to give a speech about how you are *not* one of the wolves in a village that is killing everyone else at night. You have to lie and manipulate and save yourself. I think it was a good exercise for what was happening on the set.
Boynton: There was one final game of Werewolves where, weirdly enough, J.J. Abrams was there. Josh orchestrated this final grilling of Daisy.
Gad: My hounding of Daisy started with the reveal of *The Last Jedi* title while we were shooting. I just thought it would be funny to pester her. On social media, everybody has got questions. I thought I would take it to the next level. I made her life a living hell. It then just became a fun game getting all those people involved. It was such an ensemble piece — I hope we all get to do another project together.
Jacobi: I think we should do all the Agatha Christies. A rep company.
Branagh: Part of the joy was working with a big company like this. The credits will be interesting; there is a theory that the killer is always the sixth name in the credits. That sounds very plausible. I'm thinking of messing with our credits — I'll have to talk to Fox legal, or we'll be rumbled.

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS IS IN CINEMAS FROM 3 NOVEMBER


For a brief period
in the 1980s,
Corey Feldman and Corey Haim *were* the 1980s.
Then
it
all
went
wrong.
TRUE BR



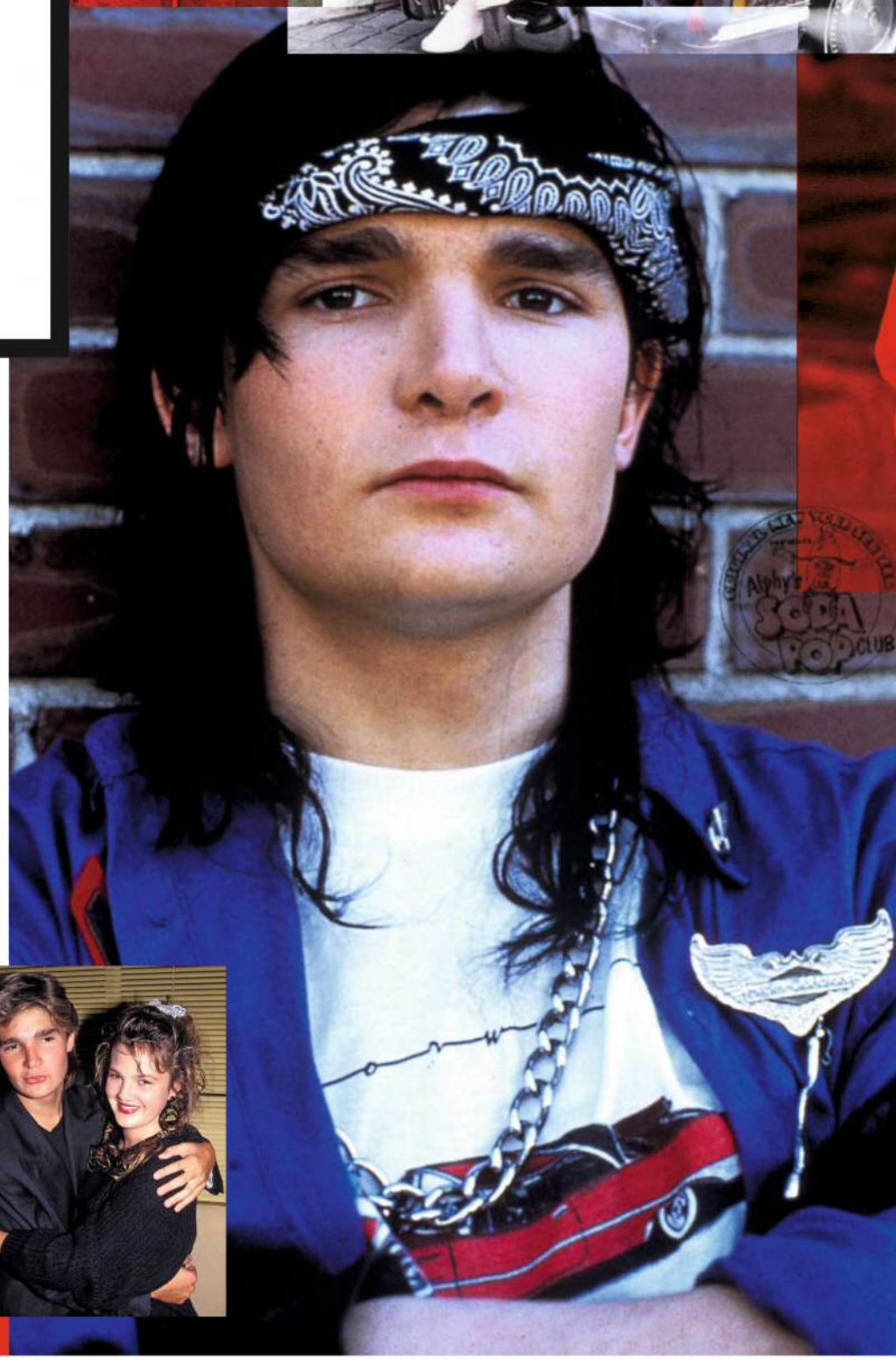
WORDS **ADAM SMITH**

OMANCE

Empire chronicles how two kids then got lost in the shadows took over Hollywood,







A tantalising hidden history of Hollywood in the 1970s and '80s no doubt resides on long-discarded answerphone tapes: tiny C30s lodged in attics, bearing on their thin, magnetic strips ghostly fragments of Hollywood brouhahas long past.

"Steven, pick up. I just saw the shark footage from yesterday. We've really got a problem..."

"Call me as soon as you get this. Coppola's gone goddamn rogue in the Philippines, and there's talk of a hurricane. A fucking *hurricane*. John. I think we have to get someone down there."

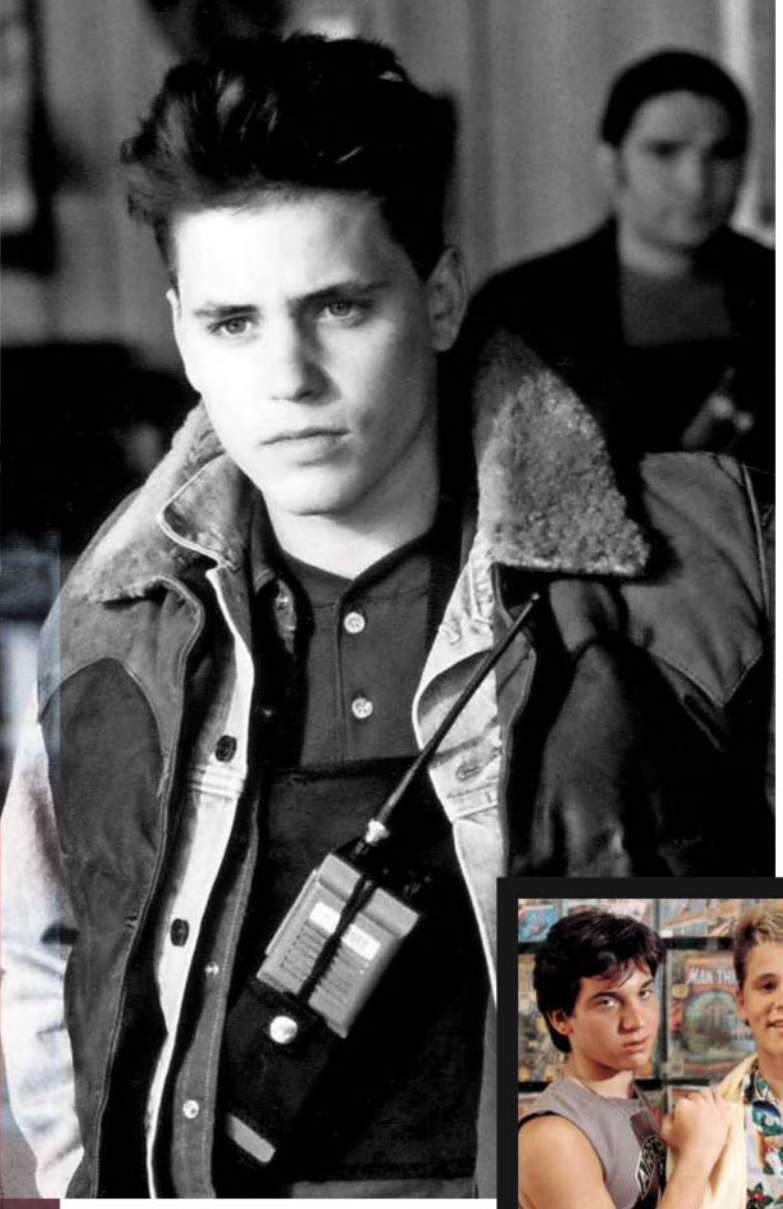
Or then there's this one: "Hey, man. It's Corey. Corey Haim. Listen, I'm really excited 'cause we're going to be working together on *The Lost Boys*. That's really cool. And we have the same name, so we're probably going to end up being really good friends. Why don't we plan a time to get together, man? Maybe we could go to the beach, throw a football around? Call me."

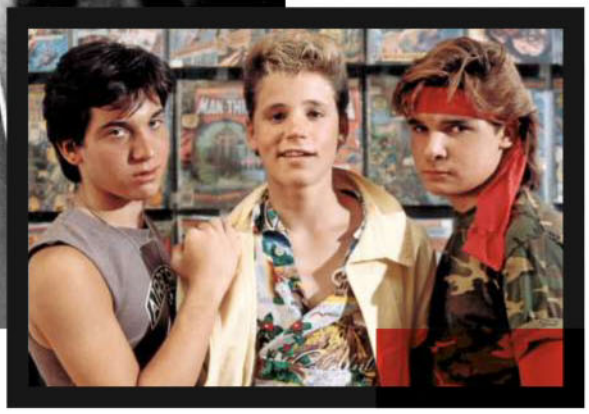
"Sounds like a nice guy," thought Feldman, a Hollywood veteran at all of 14 years old with hits including *Stand By Me* and *The Goonies* behind him, after he pressed play. "Maybe we'll get on."

And so, on a grey SoCal afternoon in 1986, Corey Haim and Corey Feldman met for the first time on a deserted beach called Paradise Cove in Malibu. The former revealed that his favourite number was 222; the latter replied that his was 22. It was the start of a friendship that would endure for 24 years, until Haim's death, aged 38, in 2010.

"We became fast friends, obviously," Feldman tells *Empire*. "We had so much in common at that point. We were the same age, same height, both Jewish, both girl-crazy. And we both had screwed-up families. His was screwed-up in a different way. But we both understood each other."

Those who knew and worked with them have nothing but happy memories. But over the years it would sometimes prove a very rough ride indeed. And fittingly, given how far they strayed off the path over the years, it all began with *The Lost Boys*.





The original pitch

was simple: "What if Peter Pan never grew up because he was a vampire?" It was screenwriters James Jeremias and Janice Fisher who hit on the idea of spinning J.M. Barrie's fairy tale into a kid-friendly horror movie, which was quickly picked up by Warner Bros. "In our screenplay the main characters were basically John and Michael and the mother was Wendy," remembers Jeremias. "They were 12 and eight, and we purposefully picked [those ages] because we wanted it before sex rears its ugly little head."

When director Joel Schumacher met Warner's executive vice-president Mark Canton in 1986 to discuss the project, he was unconvinced, spluttering, "Are you actually offering me a *kids' vampire movie*?" He only agreed to read the script after some persuasion and a few more drinks. "It was really 'Goonies Go Vampire'," Schumacher says now. But as he pondered the story, he began to envision a different take on the material. "I remember thinking, 'Well, I can make it teenagers,'" he says. "The Frog brothers could be little Rambos. And why can't Star be a sexy girl?"

Casting began. Or rather, it had already begun — Corey Feldman had been approached to play young vampire-hunter Edgar Frog when Richard Donner, the man who made the actual *The Goonies*, was in talks to direct. Schumacher asked Feldman to come in and read for the role, and was immediately enthused. "Corey had been in *Goonies* and done *Stand By Me*, and I was already crazy about him as a young actor," he says. "I thought he was great and very versatile." He gave Feldman instructions to watch Schwarzenegger and Stallone movies and gave him one note: "Can you maybe butch it up a little bit?"

As for the role of Sam Emerson, one of the movie's two lead characters, Schumacher was advised by a manager friend to check out Corey Haim's performance in tiny Canadian indie *Lucas*. "He was so charming and good in it," remembers Schumacher. "I once heard Ed Zwick say that there are some actors that seem to carry their own light with them when they walk in a room and it's true. Corey was like that."

In fact, the Coreys had been circling each other for a while, having almost been brought together a year earlier for *Stand By Me*. Haim had read for, and been offered, the role of Chris Chambers, eventually played by River Phoenix, but had accepted the lead role in *Lucas* only hours earlier. He never regretted it: his performance in the high-school drama gained raves from critics, Roger Ebert writing, "If he can continue to act this well, he will never become a half-forgotten child star, but will continue to grow into an important actor. He is that good."

Shooting in Santa Cruz, California, and on the Warner lot, Haim and Feldman didn't share a huge number of scenes. But when the movie came out in July 1987 and proved a massive hit (pipped to the number-one spot only by *The Living Daylights*), the pairing of these two kids named Corey proved a big talking point. Fans began to snap photos of them whenever they ventured out in public. And with then-mighty teen magazines *16* and *Tiger Beat* fanning the flames, soon the pair were receiving 2,000 fan letters a week. Postcards, love letters, invitations to junior prom and giant boxes of polyurethane sushi, mailed with incandescent affection by 12-year-old Japanese schoolgirls, were all physical testament to their sudden, trans-planetary appeal.

"When we met on *Lost Boys*, it was the beginning of some happy days," remembers Feldman, who fought to be legally emancipated from his parents in 1987, alleging physical and mental abuse (claims his mother has denied). "I realised my parents were so screwed up that I wasn't going to have any semblance of normality if I stayed on this course."

However, in Hollywood normality is a relative concept. A small amuse-bouche of the brewing weirdness was served up when Feldman, he says, was informed that his agent had arranged a date for him and Drew Barrymore. "Isn't she a bit young for me?" the perplexed Feldman, 14 at the time, remembers asking. Barrymore was ten.

Individually, Haim and Feldman were becoming household names. But together, the entity known as The Two Coreys was becoming an untameable beast with a demented mind of its own.

Hollywood, then in

the midst of a teen golden age, crawled with youthful talent. And Ground Zero for the Clearasil crowd (including Barrymore and Sean Astin) was LA's Alphy's Soda Pop Club. According to writer and artist Jennifer Juniper Stratford, who was a regular attendee, it was a "disco designed for kids in 'the industry'... With a clientele aged 16 and under, the club guaranteed a dance floor full of the hottest teen stars as well as all the free soda you could drink. It was the ultimate teenage wonderland."

The Coreys became lauded regulars, infamously hosting one party during which someone dived from the 11th floor into an air-bag while captive tigers were held on leashes below. And soda, it seems, wasn't the only thing on tap.

"Everyone was on drugs," Haim told Stratford in a *Vice* interview in 2012. "I was ›

Clockwise from bottom left: Corey Feldman with Drew Barrymore in 1987; Feldman in *Dream A Little Dream* and, inset, the logo for infamous teen club Alphy's Soda Pop Club; *Teen Beat* can't get enough Corey in 1989; *License To Drive*'s poster...; ... and Feldman and Corey Haim with Heather Graham in the film; Haim in *Blown Away*; The Coreys with Jamison Newlander in *The Lost Boys*.

COREY-OGRAPHY

A COMPLETE RUN-DOWN OF THE MOVIES HAIM AND FELDMAN MADE TOGETHER

The Lost Boys (1987)
Joel Schumacher's vampire flick established itself as an enduring '80s cultural artefact and one of the most appealing horror-comedies of all time.

License To Drive (1988)
Acceptable if under-torqued John Hughes clone, with Haim as the unlicensed motorist and Feldman as his buddy. Cinematography by the great Bruce Surtees (*Dirty Harry*).

Dream A Little Dream (1989)
Vice-versa movie in which Feldman has his soul knocked out of his body. Features the best supporting cast the Coreys ever had, including Piper Laurie and Harry Dean Stanton.

Blown Away (1992)
DTV erotic thriller in which the Coreys form two points of a love triangle with Haim's real-life girlfriend Nicole Eggert. Notable mainly for excessive exposure of Haim's hams.

National Lampoon's Last Resort (1994)
Barely watchable mess has the pair relocating from Detroit to a tropical island where uninspired hijinks commence. Even Zelda '*Poltergeist*' Rubinstein can't save this.

Dream A Little Dream 2 (1995)
Any charm the original had has long evaporated in this insipid retread involving 'magical sunglasses'.

Busted (1997)
"Feldman was hurling out orders while two big-breasted bimbos massaged him," Haim recalled of Feldman's directorial debut, a mirthless *Police Academy* knock-off.

Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star (2003)
There was a certain inevitability to the duo turning up in David Spade's cameo-crammed comedy. Also features Todd Bridges, Willie Aames and Gary Coleman.

Lost Boys: The Tribe (2008)
The last time the pair would appear, briefly, in a movie together was in this ill-judged re-vamp of the classic that started it all. Haim's contribution was relegated to a post-credits outtake.



on drugs, Feldman was on drugs. At the end of it, we were 16 or 17 years old! *Lost Boys* was done, and we were going to other clubs and doing drugs. So at that time, a lot of people were getting messed up."

In fact, both teenagers had become acquainted with narcotics well before they started attending Alphy's. Corey Haim smoked his first joint while filming *The Lost Boys*, while Corey Feldman tried cocaine around the same time. Schumacher had been observing the young stars from a distance, his pride tinged with concern, heightened when Feldman arrived on set unable to work. As he recalls now: "I thought, 'Hey, give a couple of kids a lot of money and limos and girlfriends and blah, blah, blah... Well, maybe they'll come out the other end of it.'"

Eager to monetise the duo's unexpected heat, 20th Century Fox put next Corey project *License To Drive* into production within months, a buddy comedy directed by director Greg Beeman. "John Hughes was the king at the time, and every studio was looking for teen comedies," Beeman recalls. "I remember being on set thinking how young everyone was. Corey Haim didn't even *have* a driver's licence. Despite Feldman, in particular, having been in the business for years, they just seemed to me to be a pair of kids."

Between them, the Coreys experimented with joints, acid, cocaine, heroin, mushrooms, Quaaludes and prescription pills. And over the years, details of their off-set misdemeanours filled tabloid covers and TV exposés: selling a personal CD collection on street corners for drugs (Feldman), being arrested and charged for threatening his business manager with a BB gun (Haim), being arrested and charged for possession of heroin (Feldman), launching a teen drug line (1-800-COREY) but being loaded while giving advice (Haim).

Clockwise from main: Joel Schumacher with his young *Lost Boys* cast; The woeful *National Lampoon's Last Resort*; Feldman graces the cover of *Splice* in May 1988; The pair celebrating 20 years of *The Lost Boys* at Collectormania in Milton Keynes, 2007; Gossip rag coverage of the hijinx at Alphy's Soda Pop Club; Frames from a TV ad urging teens to call their fan line.



> **"When Corey was sober, we had some of the funniest moments... When he was at the top of his game he was so brilliant."**
>
> COREY FELDMAN

There were an endless string of wild days and wilder nights. But in the early 1990s, facing financial ruin, Feldman finally got sober, with the help of Richard Donner, who had kept an eye on his protégé ever since the *Goonies* days and now not only paid for legal fees but put him in touch with a drug counsellor.

"I have never met a better man in this industry," says Feldman, who declined to comment to *Empire* on his one-time drug problems. "He was a father figure, someone I could go to, not just for money but emotional support. If I didn't have Richard Donner, if I didn't have some of these older people in my life who showed me how to do things for myself, who knows where I'd be."

For Haim, though, always tortured by the distant hoots and screams of a better party, somewhere out there in the night, things would never be so clear-cut.

By the early '90s, Haim and Feldman were pure gold to the supermarket tabloids but radioactive to the major studios. 1992's glossy DTV sex thriller *Blown Away* was another attempt to resurrect the success they had enjoyed as a double act on *The Lost Boys*. For director Brenton Spencer, a veteran TV director of photography, it would prove a trial by fire. "It was a gong show," he says. "Even though I had done a lot of work by then, it was still like being on a wild horse."

Spencer was not aware of drugs being present during filming, though he says that "alcohol was needed at times, to fortify". Nevertheless, the shoot was beset by chaos from the get-go. While Feldman had by now completed rehab, Haim was still a mess, being admitted to hospital on more than one occasion. But in the midst of the belaboured production, what impressed itself on Spencer was the relationship between Haim and his friend. "You know, [they] went from making $800,000 a movie to making $50,000. It was such a fall," he says. "But there was a great simpatico between the two of them. There were so many takers in Corey Haim's life, except for Corey Feldman. Corey understood him. And Corey did not take from him."

But by the time Haim was cast solo in 1994's *The Club*, again directed by Spencer, he had become a straight liability, making frequent hospital visits within the first week.

"It wasn't completed with Corey," sighs the director, who was forced to fire Haim (the role was ultimately played by J.H. Wyman). "I'd go and wait for him in the lobby at Outpatients. He was at a real low then, you could see that."

The pair's demise as a marketable duo seemed pretty much sealed. *National Lampoon's Last Resort* (1994) was an aptly titled farrago. Feldman took a VHS tape of it to Haim in rehab. "Dude, this movie sucks," an appalled Haim told his friend. "Yeah, but we thought it was great. That's what drugs do to you," Feldman responded. But if Feldman had Haim's drug habit to blame for *Last Resort*, a similar excuse was not available to him for *Busted* (1997), a Feldman-directed *Police Academy* rip-off that marked the final time they would share a big screen.

By the end of 1997, Haim, finally apparently admitting defeat, returned to live in Canada with his mother and filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Sporadic appearances either in forgettable DTV movies or in the pages of gossip rags continued, until 2007 TV reality show *The Two Coreys* caused a tidal wave of publicity. In the first episode of Season 2, titled 'Showdown', the pair argued heatedly in a diner, claiming that they had both been abused by men at Hollywood parties as children. "If you can't trust your own parents or the people your parents hire to look after you, who can you trust?" says Feldman of those early days.

Despite the dark revelations, *The Two Coreys* was an endearing showcase of the duo's unique bond. "When he was sober, we had some of the funniest moments ever created between the two of us, even funnier than some of the films we did," Feldman says of shooting it. "When he was at the top of his game he was so witty and so brilliant." Off the back of it, Haim was given a cameo in *Crank: High Voltage*, while he and Feldman were reported to be prepping a sequel to *License To Drive* titled *License To Fly*.

But on 10 March 2010, paramedics were called to the Oakwood Apartments where Haim was then living, looking after his mother. He was pronounced dead in the early hours at Providence Saint Joseph Medical Center. The cause of death was later determined to be pneumonia; although there were traces of eight legal drugs in his system, the coroner's office ruled that they were not a factor.

"I'm responsible, without realising it, for what were the best of times, and the worst of times," muses Schumacher, 30 years after *The Lost Boys* launched the Coreys upon an unsuspecting planet. "They became fast friends, immediately. They were going up to Michael Jackson's house and hanging together and doing everything together. I've seen Corey Feldman many times since and I'm so proud of him that he really pulled himself together. He's been through a lot."

Feldman himself still misses his old friend every day. "For all intents and purposes we really were brothers," he says. "We both dealt with some of the same demons, both the demons we brought onto ourselves, and more importantly the demons that were pushed onto us."

But then, that always was the grim secret of Hollywood, that neon-flecked boardwalk by the sea.

All the damn vampires.

ALAMY, GETTY, PHOTOFEST, REX FEATURES

MOVIE STRUCK

In *Empire*'s latest director-on-director interview, Jon Watts chats to Peter Bogdanovich about partners-in-crime classic *Paper Moon*



PORTRAITS
STEVE SCHOFIELD



Jon Watts and Peter Bogdanovich, photographed exclusively for *Empire* in Los Angeles on 27 June 2017.

When I first saw *Paper Moon* as a kid, I didn't understand what section of the video store it belonged in.

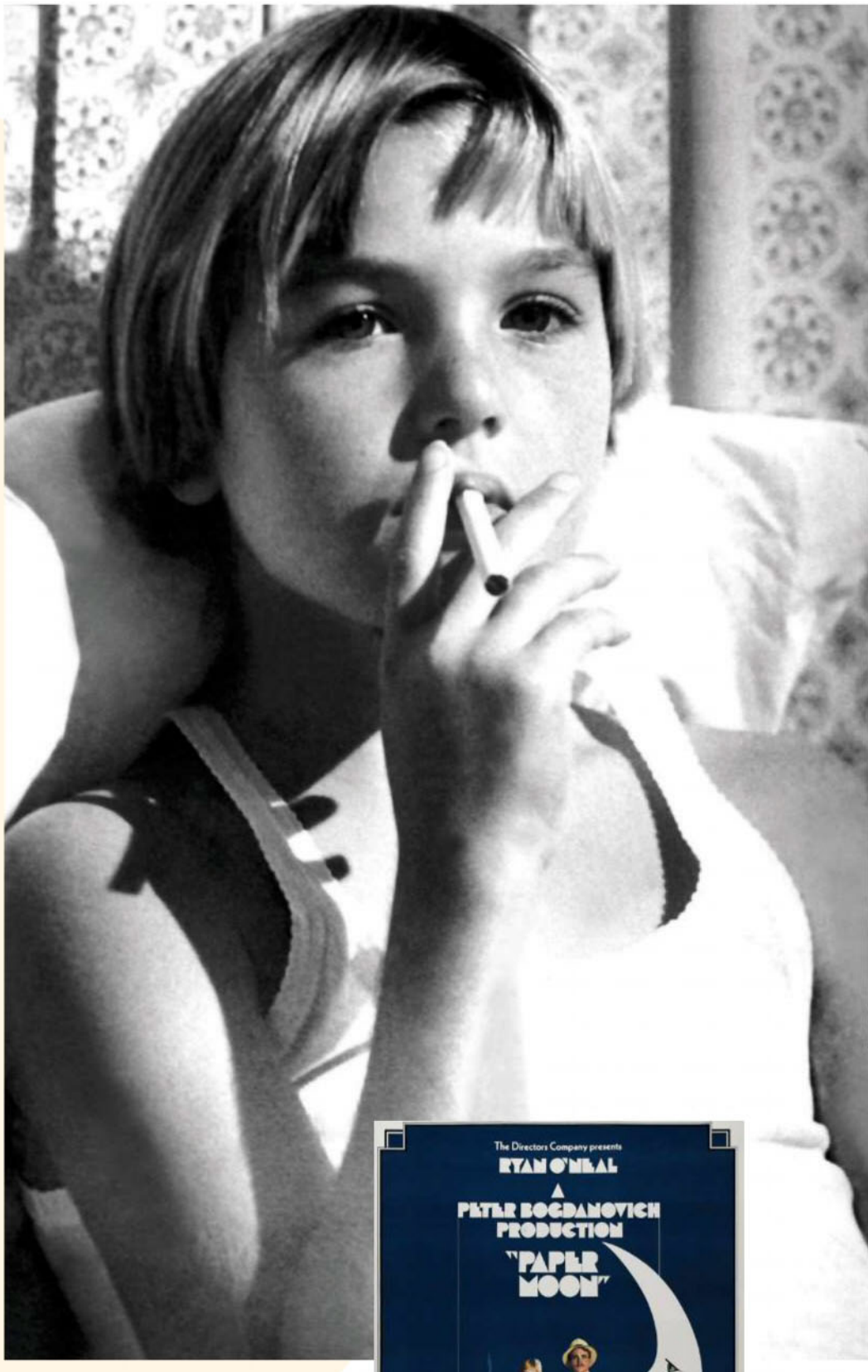
The story of two con artists — a man named Moses Pray (Ryan O'Neal) and the nine-year-old Addie Loggins (Tatum O'Neal) who poses as his daughter — it was set during the Depression and filmed in black-and-white, but the VHS box claimed it was made in the '70s and was a comedy. There were curse words and sexual innuendo but it had a sweetness and humour that felt different from the other 'classic' '70s films I was watching. It was a complete outlier and I loved it from the moment I saw it.

As I learned more about the craft of filmmaking, I returned to *Paper Moon* many times, always discovering new details that deepened my appreciation for the film — the long takes, the use of music, the immaculate production design. To me, there are few films that feel as complete. It's hard to imagine it being filmed; it's as if the film reels just appeared, fully formed and ready. I wanted to talk to Peter Bogdanovich because I wanted to know how he made something so precise look so effortless.

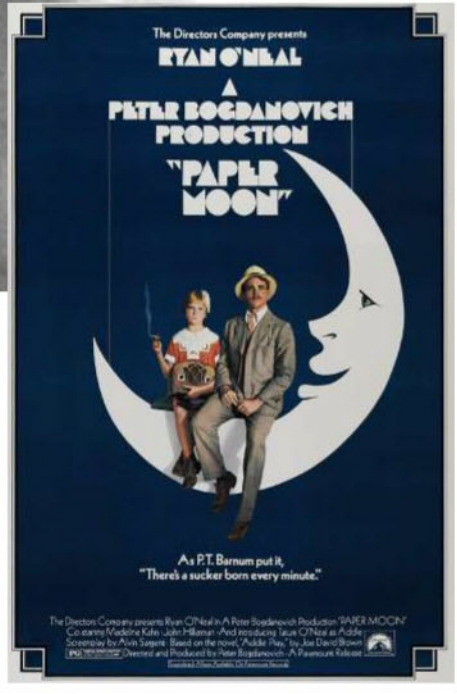
Peter is the ultimate interviewer of directors, so I was understandably nervous about talking to him. *Who The Devil Made It*, his collection of interviews with classic filmmakers, is essential reading for anyone who cares about how films are made. I was worried he'd roll his eyes at my questions. Instead, I found myself sitting across from someone who seemed as excited about his films as when he made them. He loves talking about the process, the happy accidents, the gossip. The thing that doesn't come across in written interviews with Peter is that when he's telling a story about an old star, director or producer, he's doing an uncanny imitation of them. It's as if he's a medium and all the ghosts of old Hollywood are speaking through him.

It was a dream come true, and I left the interview feeling inspired and with a whole new list of questions that I wanted to ask about his other films. I hope I get the chance.

JON WATTS (director of *Spider-Man: Homecoming* and *Cop Car*)







PREVIOUS PAGE: GROOMING BY JHIZET PANOSIAN AT FORWARD ARTISTS. SHOT AT EDGE STUDIOS, LOS ANGELES

Clockwise from left: Addie (Tatum O'Neal) takes a drag; The whippersnapper with her partner-in-crime, Moses (Ryan O'Neal); The one-shot car scene took two days and countless takes; The original 1973 poster; Addie with Trixie Delight's downtrodden maid, Imogene (P.J. Johnson).





Jon Watts: It's so good to meet you. You showed *The Cat's Meow* when I was at NYU and I remember there was a big Q&A but I didn't get a chance to talk to you afterwards. I've always wanted to.
Peter Bogdanovich: Well, here we are.
Watts: I tried to come up with some questions that are not the ones everyone has asked for a thousand years about *Paper Moon*, and I've found that directors love the movie. Everyone loves it, but directors seem to especially love it. It's always on Top Ten Films Of All Time lists. I was trying to figure out why that is, and I think it's because there's a precision to it you don't always see in films. I have a hard time imagining shots that were cut out. Were there any?
Bogdanovich: Nothing.
Watts: It must've taken you five minutes to edit!
Bogdanovich: We actually showed it to the studio three weeks after we wrapped, at Christmas. It was on reels back then. The penultimate reel ends with [Addie] going into Aunt Billie's. The door closed and the lights came up and everybody said, "Is that the end?" I told them, "No, no, it's a mistake!" and went back to the projection room. Most of the major directors I spoke to in my interviewing days only shot what they needed.
Watts: That was a way to maintain control in the studio system too, right?
Bogdanovich: It was indeed. There's a great story about [John] Ford. Someone said, "Shall we get a close-up of Walter under the tree?" And he said, "Oh Jesus, no! They'll just use it."
Watts: [*Laughs*] Every time I watch *Paper Moon*, I pick up something new. I was watching it again last night and one thing I realised this time was how often you use a song and cut it off in the middle of a line. The songs that are playing never resolve in the scene. At the hotel, Addie is listening to *A Picture Of Me Without You*, and it cuts right before it says "you". And then there's the scene later on when they're spying on the bootlegger for the first time and there's *Nobody's Darlin' But Mine*, and right as the lyrics say, "My momma's dead in heaven, my daddy..." you cut. The songs never finish the sentence.
Bogdanovich: The whole idea was to make it feel like it's realistic, the action is just happening. But I stole the idea of using no score from *Rear Window*, Hitchcock's picture. He has a score at the start and at the end, but all through the rest of the picture, nothing. Just sounds — a record playing or something. I've used it for virtually all the pictures I've made. I think I used a score in *At Long Last Love* [1975] and *Nickelodeon* [1976]. The next picture I'm going to direct is a fantasy film that has ghosts in it and I might use a score for that.

Watts: It's amazing, because you can watch *Paper Moon* on mute and completely follow what's happening.

Bogdanovich: That's nice. I've talked to Allan Dwan who, as Orson Welles said, "started directing sometime around the invention of the electric light". And I asked him when sound came in, how did he feel about it? He said, "Well, I would finish a sound picture, run it silently and if I could follow it, I figured I'd done a pretty good job. If I couldn't, I figured I hadn't done a good job." I haven't done that, but I think to myself how it must play without sound.
Watts: I made a movie with two ten-year-olds in a car [*Cop Car*] and it was difficult. Apparently, the long one-shot with Ryan and Tatum as they're driving took you two days. Did it require an insane amount of takes?
Bogdanovich: We did it 25 times the first day! It was the most difficult scene in the picture. We were pulling the car with a camera car, so all Ryan had to do was pretend to drive. There was a cop ahead of us to make sure we were safe. But there was only one mile of the road that was period — it had some anachronisms before and after — and only one place where you could pull in, pull out and get back. So we would get ten lines or five lines into it and Tatum would fuck it up and we'd have to go all the way to the turnaround and come back. Ryan said, "Why are we doing this in one shot? Can't we cut?" I said, "You know, families have arguments. But they're not going to walk out on each other — it's just an argument. It's going to end and they'll be together." I felt that we should just watch them, because they're not going to break up: they're family. They're stuck in that frame together.
Watts: That makes so much sense, because when you cut, it releases that tension.
Bogdanovich: And also I thought, "It's a tough scene to play, so it would show the audience, those people who look at those kinds of things, that Tatum can do it."
Watts: As a kid, that she can pull this off and it's not a manufactured performance?
Bogdanovich: Well, you can do a lot with a cut. She had all this business — the map, the radio, ›

the cigar box, all that shit. And we shot the scene 25 times and didn't get it. Ryan comes to me and goes, "I did 5,000 episodes of [soap opera] *Peyton Place*, but I'm gonna go crazy! I want to kill her!" We came back three or four days later, because we had rain or something, and did 15 takes and got it in one of those takes.

Watts: It's amazing. It's such a complicated scene too, because they're fighting but also realising that they have to work together. Where are you in that situation? On the camera car?

Bogdanovich: Yeah, I was sitting up front.

Watts: I can imagine the tension, hoping that she doesn't screw up.

Bogdanovich: A lot of tension.

Watts: There's another moment where she's sitting on all the boxes of whiskey they've stolen from the bootlegger and they're pulling out, where it looks like the whole thing is going to fall over.

Bogdanovich: It almost did.

Watts: It seemed genuinely dangerous. **Bogdanovich:** The whole movie was dangerous! It was a genuine scream she lets out. I think we nailed some of the boxes down.

Watts: You feel like some are solid, but the top ones are toppling. It makes it pretty thrilling.

Bogdanovich: I hated shooting this movie so much that I came in four days under schedule. My first wife Polly [Platt] was on the picture [as production designer] and we weren't getting along. That was the last one we did together because it just wasn't working. I was just not happy, so I came in under schedule.

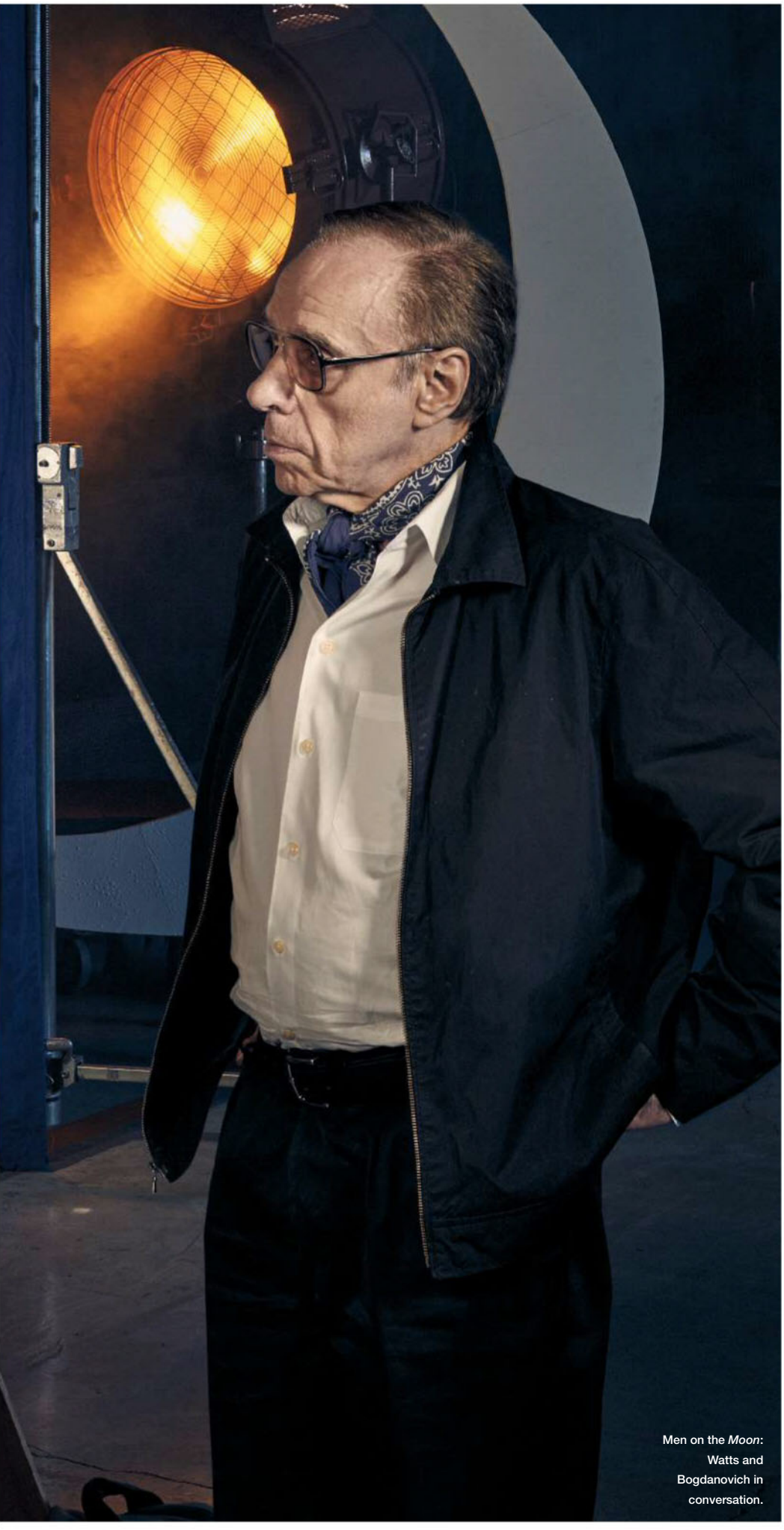
Watts: It's always a good motivation for directors to stay under budget and schedule! I read that Steven Spielberg was short on *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* because everyone had food poisoning, so he wrapped a week early. That must have been a difficult situation for you to be working in.

Bogdanovich: It wasn't pleasant.

Watts: Going back a little, how did you come up with the title?

Bogdanovich: Whenever I do a period picture, I look at what songs were popular in that period. This movie was set in 1935, and as I was looking down at the list I saw a song called *It's Only A Paper Moon*. For some reason those two words jumped out at me. And the song kind of goes with the story.





Men on the *Moon*: Watts and Bogdanovich in conversation.

Watts: The idea that something's not really real, but if you believe in it, it is.
Bogdanovich: Yeah. I said to the studio, "I want to call the picture 'Paper Moon'." They asked why. "It's a good title, don't you think?" "No." Frank Yablans [Paramount Pictures President], he said, "The book is a bestseller, Peter." And it was called *Addie Pray*. I said, "How many copies did it sell?" "100,000." "Gee, if we get 100,000 people that's not a big movie..." "Okay, okay..." So he said, "Let's not get into a beef. Let's just call it 'Addie Pray' and walk away." So I called Orson Welles, who was in Rome.
Watts: This was in 1972?
Bogdanovich: Yeah, 1972. I called him long distance and it was a very bad connection. "Can you hear me?" "Barely. What do you want, I'm cutting..." I said, "Can you just take a minute and tell me what do you think of this title? 'Paper... Moon'." Short pause. "That title is so good, you don't even need to make the picture. Just release the title!"
Watts: [*Laughs*] They changed the book's title. You can only get it as *Paper Moon* now — you can't find *Addie Pray*...
Bogdanovich: I know, it's a much better title.
Watts: The iconic photograph scene [in which Moses and Addie pose in front of a moon at a carnival] isn't in the book.

Bogdanovich: I called [screenwriter] Alvin Sargent and said, "You know that carnival scene you've got? Let's put a cardboard moon in there so we can take her picture..." He said, "Why?" I said, "So we can call the fucking thing 'Paper Moon' and the studio won't ask why!"

At that point we didn't know how we were going to pay the photograph off at the end. We didn't actually have an ending, even as far through as halfway through the shoot.
Watts: Because it's the middle of the book, essentially, where the movie ends.
Bogdanovich: Yeah. Alvin and I talked about it and thought they ought to end up together. The audience would not buy it if they were apart. ›





Orson thought that was a terrible ending — he thought it was irresponsible that I'd left it like that — but I told him that was the point. What happened was interesting. It was a series of accidental events. The book is set in the deep South, but I thought there had been too much of that already with Tennessee Williams and Truman Capote and the rest. So [associate producer] Frank Marshall and Polly scouted locations and showed me this road, this little hill, this road that goes on forever. I said, "Where's this?" And they said, "We don't know what it's for, but it's a good road. I agreed, but didn't know what to do with it either. And then I remembered something Leo McCarey said to me: "Always pay everything off." When Polly and I drove across the country in 1964...

Watts: New York to LA, right?

Bogdanovich: Right. We had a car with a cracked block — it was a fucking piece of shit, this car. We were broke. It would overheat easily, so what we would do is, whenever we could, was put it in neutral and coast down a hill. And it all came together. I thought, "She leaves the photograph with him. He tells her he doesn't want her riding with him anymore, but she says he still owes her $200 and he gets pissed off..."

Watts: And he throws his hat down! In a way, it makes it all feel somewhat inevitable.

They're at a standstill and the fact that the car is going downhill means it just has to keep going.

Bogdanovich: But it all comes from paying everything off, which is a very important thing when you're making a movie, particularly a comedy, or sort of a comedy. That's how the ending came about.

Watts: There's one art-direction touch that I'm curious [about] how intentional it is. There are always these ghostly women in the background. Like at the diner in the Coney Island hot dog scene, there's an ad of a woman in the background behind Ryan. And in the scene near the end with the piano, on the piece of sheet music there's this picture of a woman. And then there's a third example when they're about to do the scam with the bootleggers — she's reading a magazine and it has a picture of a woman smoking on it. So it feels like there's these ghostly versions of a mom throughout the movie.

Bogdanovich: That's really good, I'm going to use that! I didn't think of it.

Watts: This is just me projecting onto the movie. In a way, at the end, after Moses disappears and Addie is standing on the corner, you hear his voice very softly and quietly. It's almost like it feels higher-pitched to me, almost like a ghost.

Bogdanovich: Yeah, well, he's going away.

Watts: And the city is almost deserted. I guess everyone's at church... But there's a building that's half knocked down. It feels ghostly and spooky. I took all that with the ghostly mother idea that is throughout the scenes.

Bogdanovich: I'll buy that from you!

Watts: You can take it! Madeline Kahn is amazing as Trixie Delight. How did you meet her? Because her first movie was *What's Up, Doc?* [in 1972], right?

Bogdanovich: I went to New York when I was casting that for a couple of days to see some actors there. Nessa Hyams was the casting director and she pulled a few people for me to see, including Austin Pendleton and Madeline. She came in, we were talking and I was laughing and she asked me why. I said, "Because you're funny!" "I am?" She didn't think she was funny.

Watts: Was she more a singer at that point?

Bogdanovich: She was on Broadway with Danny Kaye in a play called *Two By Two*, I think, about Noah's Ark. I didn't see it, I didn't have time to.

Watts: She really didn't think she was funny?

Bogdanovich: She didn't know. I just cast her from talking to her — she didn't read for me.

Watts: I laugh at everything she does in the movie, even just the smallest gestures.

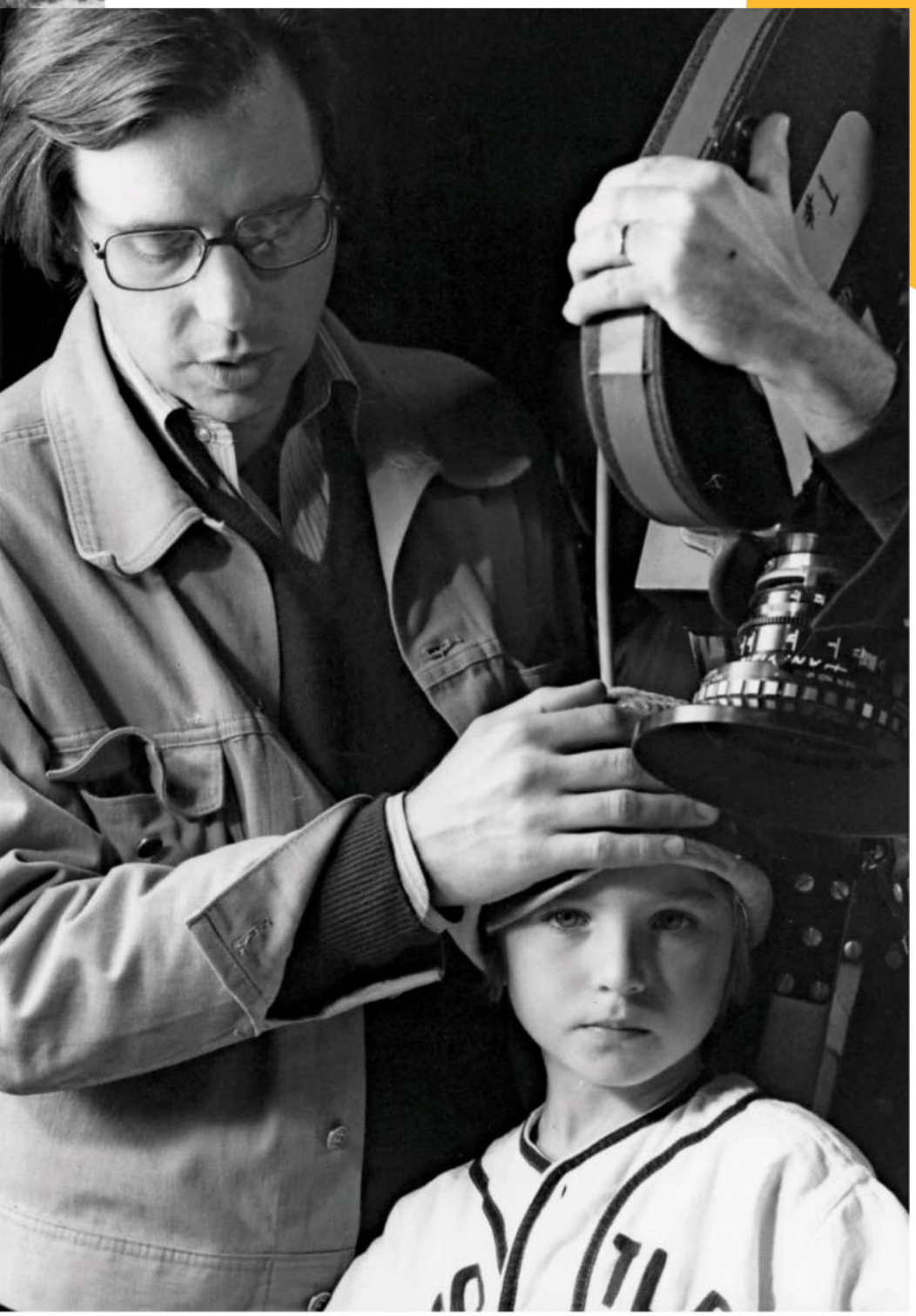
Bogdanovich: She's brilliant. She told me she went to see *What's Up, Doc?* at Radio City

ALAMY, BFI





Clockwise from left: The final emotional stand-off between Moses and Addie; Working the charm on Madeline Kahn's Trixie Delight (right); Bogdanovich subjects Tatum O'Neal to an extreme close-up; Ryan O'Neal consults Bogdanovich on the set of *Paper Moon*.



Music Hall and 6,500 people laughed, so she went to therapy.

Watts: They wanted to make a sequel to *Paper Moon*, didn't they, called 'Harvest Moon'? **Bogdanovich:** They wanted to call it that. I said, "We just did it, let's not do it again."

Watts: Was it the continued adventures?
Bogdanovich: The second half of the book. It's a scam on this old lady.
Watts: That wouldn't be fun.
Bogdanovich: I didn't want to do it.
Watts: But they made the TV show!
Bogdanovich: Yeah, that was funny.
Watts: It's funny that it's Jodie Foster, looking back on that.
Bogdanovich: Isn't it?
Watts: She's good...
Bogdanovich: She is. What happened is, they called me up and told me they were doing a TV series and did I want to be involved? I said, "Don't call it 'Paper Moon'." They said, "Are you kidding? It's a million-dollar title."
Watts: Now!
Bogdanovich: So I said, "Why don't you call it 'The Adventures Of Addie Pray'?" "No, no — *Paper Moon*." I said, "You gonna shoot it in colour or black-and-white?" "Colour." "That's not going to look good." "Why not?" "Because it's too pretty, like a Disney movie." That's why I did the movie in black-and-white in the first place.
Watts: Why didn't you shoot *Nickelodeon* in black-and-white?
Bogdanovich: They wouldn't let me. There is a version of it in black-and-white on DVD now.
Watts: So that was always the intention?
Bogdanovich: Yeah. I had two fucking hits in the same decade, in black-and-white, but [executive] David Begelman said the picture was too big for it.
Watts: Jumping back a bit, what would Orson Welles have been working on in 1972? A TV thing?
Bogdanovich: A television show. There's a new book that's quite interesting called *Young Orson*, by a guy whose name I can't remember. It's quite a good book, about everything before *Citizen Kane*. He had an amazing career early on.
Watts: Every time I think about how old I am, I feel like a complete failure.
Bogdanovich: I do too!

SPOILER WARNING

RE.VIEW

THE INDISPENSABLE GUIDE TO HOME ENTERTAINMENT

EDITED BY **CHRIS HEWITT**



THE EMPIRE VIEWING GUIDE

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL. 2

Director James Gunn sheds light on his latest awesome cinematic mixtape

WORDS **CHRIS HEWITT**



00.04.41

DANCING GROOT __ After a brief prologue set on Earth in 1980, *GOTG Vol. 2* thumbs its nose to action movie protocol by keeping an epic space battle in the background in favour of Baby Groot (mo-capped by Gunn himself) dancing to ELO's *Mr Blue Sky*. With many elements filmed early on in the process and using over 4,000 layers, Gunn calls this "probably the most complicated visual effects shot ever created for film." ›

THE EMPIRE VERDICT

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL. 2

★★★★

CERT **12**

What we said: "There's plenty to enjoy here, whether it's the perfectly deployed Baby Groot moments, or the anarchic weirdness that still feels unique to this franchise." **Notable extras:** A Gunn commentary, deleted scenes, some featurettes and a gag reel.



00.26.57

CLIFFHANGER 2 __ On the brothel planet of Contraxia, Yondu (Michael Rooker) has a shouting match with his old Ravager buddy, Stakar Ogord (Sylvester Stallone). "Rooker is an incredibly intense actor and it's very difficult to have another actor yelling at him and have it be believable that Rooker is diminished," says Gunn of casting Stallone, a suggestion first made by executive producer and Marvel mainstay Louis D'Esposito.



00.57.32

DRAX THE DESTROYED __ In a film where Dave Bautista's Drax is consistently hilarious, as the empathic Mantis (Pom Klementieff) literally feels the pain he carries with him about his dead daughter, it's a reminder he's more than comic relief. Initially, the scene featured a speech by Mantis that was taken out at the suggestion of editor Craig Wood. "You get every single bit of what she said on her face," adds Gunn.



01.07.45

RAVAGING THE RAVAGERS __ In the film's most audacious sequence, Yondu, Rocket (Bradley Cooper) and Groot turn the table on their Ravager captors by killing them all in cold blood. "And laughing while they're doing it!" adds Gunn. "People say Baby Groot is Disneyfication. Disneyfication? He brutally murders a man because he's angry! The morality in outer space is not the same as it is on Earth."



01.16.19

GAMORA GOT A GUN __ When Gamora (Zoe Saldana) is attacked by her sister Nebula (Karen Gillan) in a sequence that apes the cropduster scene in *North By Northwest*, things escalate until the greenskinned daughter of Thanos lets rip. "I saw my friend James Wan's *Fast & Furious 7* and The Rock has a giant gun in that," laughs Gunn,"I said, 'Fuck you, Rock, I'll make a much bigger gun and give it to Zoe Saldana."



01.28.35

EGO'S ID __ After much teasing, Kurt Russell's Ego — the long-lost father of Star-Lord (Chris Pratt) — finally reveals his villainous intent, and drops the bombshell: his role in the death of Peter's beloved mother. "That was a huge error on his part," admits Gunn. "But there is a piece of him that is incredibly lonely and alienated. He does have this desire to bond with his son. The thing that kills him is his desire to be loved."



01.40.02

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK __ As the final battle rages *inside* the body of Ego (who is a planet, after all), Star-Lord sighs, "What a day!" before plunging back into the fray. Your ears don't deceive you — the film takes place in "a little more than a day," clarifies Gunn. It echoes *The Empire Strikes Back*'s timeframe, coincidentally. "It's my natural style. *Guardians Vol. 1* and *2* only take place in a couple of days."



01.40.36

THE DEATH BUTTON __ "This is very much the bookend of the opening sequence," says Gunn of the standout moment in which Rocket and Groot have a very Abbott and Costello-like conversation about the impromptu bomb Rocket has built. "There's a minute-long shot of Rocket waiting and coughing, and Groot fiddling with the wire while there's obviously a humongous battle going on outside the cavern that we never see."



01.44.21

GUARDIANS... ASSEMBLE! __ The Guardians, including new members Yondu and Nebula, stand together to battle Ego, only to have a rogue rock knock out Mantis. Gunn always intended to swell the Guardians' numbers in this movie. "When Karen Gillan came in to read for Nebula, I told her the plan is that Nebula will join them. I love the path of the redeemed villain — that's what all the Guardians are."



01.53.59

YONDU, YONDON'T __ Yondu's Guardians subscription is short-lived, as Quill's adoptive dad sacrifices himself to save his boy. Disney's Alan Horn mooted the idea, Gunn admits he resisted. "Then I realised it was a true act of love, of heroism, and that's what *Guardians* is at its very core."

***GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL. 2* IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD**


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THE EMPIRE MASTERPIECE

TWO-LANE BLACKTOP

A road movie that goes the full Monte

1971 / CERT **15**

WORDS **ADAM SMITH**

DIRECTOR MONTE HELLMAN has always felt like a footnote in the grand story of Hollywood's last Golden Age: an outsider amongst outsiders, rarely mentioned in the same breath as the likes of Coppola, Lucas and Scorsese. But his brief filmography, in *Ride In The Whirlwind* and *The Shooting*, a brace of 'acid Westerns' he shot for Roger Corman back-to-back and for under $80,000, contains two of the decade's most distinctive films. And in *Two-Lane Blacktop* he created arguably the best, possibly the strangest, and certainly the purest, road movie ever made.

If Hellman's minor-key masterpiece never really got the kudos of the other classics of the period, it was cut from the same cloth of its better-known stablemates. In late 1969, after the shocking success of *Easy Rider*, bewildered executives at Universal unpacked the ancient cultural ear-trumpet, detected something of a youthquake in progress, and promptly panicked. "It was frightening," studio bigwig Ned Tanen later remembered. "These were ageing gentlemen who did not remotely understand where their audience had gone. Suddenly we were looking at these movies where everybody was dropping acid, and fucking in the park."

Their solution was to throw money, albeit small amounts, at the problem. A new unit, headed up by Tanen, was tasked with finding projects that might resonate with the hip, new audience. Tanen rushed low-budget projects into production, including Douglas Trumbull's eco sci-fi, *Silent Running*, and *The Hired Hand*, an anti-Western by Peter Fonda, who Tanen hoped



On the road: The Girl (Laurie Bird), The Driver (James Taylor) and The Mechanic (Dennis Wilson).

might repeat the magic he had wrought with *Easy Rider*, and later George Lucas' *American Graffiti*. But among these hail Mary productions, *Two-Lane Blacktop* at least had the trappings of conventional commercial success in its automotive theme. What's more, it had two genuine pop icons attached in the form of Beach Boys drummer Dennis Wilson and singer-songwriter James Taylor.

Monte Hellman had been sent the original screenplay while in Italy prepping an adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's *The Two Faces Of January*, which would ultimately never be shot. Hating it, he had nevertheless seen promise in the central idea, and having read cult novel *Nog*, appointed its author Rudy Wurlitzer to come up with a screenplay. Wurlitzer dumped almost everything in the way of conventional story, instead focussing on the mostly silent characters and their strange, compulsive race. In his script, the wide-open spaces of the American landscape are matched, and occasionally dwarfed, by the fascinating emptinesses where conventional plot should be. If Antonioni had been a petrolhead Beach Boys fan, he might have come up with something like *Two-Lane Blacktop*.

The film that emerged after an eight-week shoot on a final budget just shy of $900,000 is, then, a quietly magnificent exploration of four characters, all desperate in their own ways, in search of some kind of meaning, set against the sometimes ragged, sometimes spectacular backdrop of America's Southwest. The Driver (Taylor) and The Mechanic (Wilson) are lank-haired hipsters, who make their living racing their souped-up 1955 Chevy. By chance, they meet an inexplicably competitive older man (the inestimable Warren Oates, who had worked with Hellman previously on *The Shooting*), whose state-of-the-art, banana-yellow Pontiac GTO may (or may not) be a metaphor for the flashy inauthenticities of the rat race. Mostly at GTO's behest, they agree to race to Washington DC, the winners to take the loser's car.

During the rest-stops and random hitch-hikers picked up along the way (look out for a young H.D. Stanton, later to be Harry Dean, as a gay passenger) that function as brief opportunities for unreliable exposition, GTO variously claims to be a test pilot and a TV location scout. A fourth cipher arrives with The Girl, played by Laurie Bird, a New York model who later committed suicide in Art Garfunkel's apartment. A blank-faced ingénue who attracts the attention both of The Driver and GTO, she has more than a little of the mesmerising, natural air of her contemporary, Sissy Spacek.

The most obvious point of comparison is, of course, Fonda's counter-cultural carnival *Easy Rider*, but Hellman's film is quieter, sadder and more deeply felt. And at its heart is a towering performance by Oates. The only professional actor amongst the cast, he radiates a bruised, nervous vanity. His various dreams — to go to New York, or Florida, or finally Mexico — come and go as quickly as his fantasies about his past. He's a man obsessed with racing who was long ago left behind. Ironically enough, it's his performance as the senior man in this youth-oriented film that lends *Two-Lane Blacktop* its heartbreaking, occasionally funny timelessness.

Seventies audiences didn't dig Hellman's film and his career would never really recover. Subsequently, he embarked on his own eclectic odyssey, performing second-unit duties on Paul Verhoeven's *RoboCop* and executive-producing *Reservoir Dogs* among other detours. (Now aged 85, he still teaches film in California.) But though *Two-Lane Blacktop* may, in all sorts of ways, be a road to nowhere, boy, is it worth the trip.

***TWO-LANE BLACKTOP* IS OUT NOW ON DVD AND BLU-RAY**

KIDS WATCH CLASSICS

Big films tackled by little people

ILLUSTRATION **OLLY GIBBS**



JOSEPH HOWES – 7
¡THREE AMIGOS!

What did you think about the film?
It was really funny and so I liked it. The characters were goofing around and being stupid.

What did you think the film was going to be about?
I didn't think it was going to be very funny at first, because the cover of the DVD didn't really look funny. But when I heard the song [*The Ballad Of The Three Amigos*], I realised it was going to be funny. When they did the, "Aaaaaaaaaah," bit for a really long time, it absolutely drove me nuts!

Who was your favourite member of the Three Amigos?
I thought they were all really funny and silly. But my favourite one was probably the Amigo with the guitar, Dusty Bottoms [Chevy Chase], because when he plays the guitar in the desert, all the creatures come along to see what's going on. Like, an owl turns up! And then a tortoise says, "Goodnight Ned!"

Was that your favourite part?
No. I think the bit I liked best was probably when… they were all good, but when Dusty shoots the invisible swordsman. Because you don't expect him to be stood right beside them, but he's invisible! Then he falls — PLONK! — in the sand!

Did you have a least favourite bit?
Not really, actually. Everything made me laugh.

Who should watch this movie?
Whoever reads this! You should watch it!

What star rating would you give it, out of five?
A million! Or five, because it's so funny. I just have to give it five!



Baker's Doctor in 'The Horns Of Nimon'.

BAKER'S HALF DOZEN

The Fourth Doctor on his greatest *Doctor Who* moments

WORDS **SEB PATRICK**

TOM BAKER IS one of the most iconic Doctors, defining the character's key traits of whimsy, charm and manic unpredictability. Here, the ever-mercurial actor walks us through his time in the TARDIS.



ROBOT (1974)

In his first appearance, Baker was given the line, "There's no point in being grown-up if you can't be childish sometimes."

"When I took over, Jon Pertwee had stamped on it so hard that the writers, for quite a while, they were all still writing for him. I was wrenching Jon's idiom, to make it my own. And of course, over time, they began to write for me. But that line, it's quite a charming bit of nonsense, isn't it? It's the one that people still ask me to quote."



GENESIS OF THE DALEKS (1975)

The origin story of The Doctor's most famous foes saw him faced with a moral dilemma over whether to destroy them at the point of their creation.

"The Doctor does tend to moralise slightly, and to waffle on about it a bit. He's always on the side of good, but good and evil is often a very complicated relationship. He might even border on being a bit preachy sometimes — but we tried to mask that a bit!"



CITY OF DEATH (1979)

A hugely popular story in which The Doctor and Lalla Ward's Romana experience time distortion. Co-written by Douglas Adams, it was filmed on location in Paris.

"That was a particularly fine script, and it was lovely to work with Julian Glover — a big, classical actor. There I was, trotting around in some smart area of Paris with my long coat on and my long hair and my flying scarf. All the people around, they just thought I was some quaint artistic type, dashing around Paris and showing off a bit."

BBC





LOGOPOLIS (1981)

After a record-breaking seven years in the role, Baker handed over the reins to Peter Davison.

"When the moment comes, it's really rather poignant, that you're going off and letting someone else have a go. But it wasn't all that painful. I slipped out of it, and went off and did other things — of course, nothing approaching the success of *Doctor Who*. But I never really stopped. I've spent half of my life playing this part!"

THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES (2012)

In fact, Baker returned to the role of The Doctor for a series of audio dramas, produced by Big Finish, and is still going strong in the role.

"It's so wonderful to be still in demand in this glorious part which fits me like a glove, really. We work a long way ahead, so some of my stuff now won't come out for maybe four years. That's an incredible thought, because, in four years' time I might be, as they say [*clearing his throat*], *otherwise engaged*."



THE DAY OF THE DOCTOR (2013)

In the 50th anniversary special, Baker played the role of 'The Curator' — a future incarnation of The Doctor.

"I met Caroline Skinner when I was doing a commercial, and it was only later that she revealed herself to be the producer of *Doctor Who*! So they asked me, and I agreed to do a scene. Matt Smith [the Eleventh Doctor] was enchanting. On the big day, I was at the ExCeL [for the anniversary convention]. And when the scene was shown, the whole place exploded — it was very moving, very touching indeed."

***THE DOCTORS: THE TOM BAKER YEARS* IS OUT ON 11 SEPTEMBER ON DVD AND BLU-RAY**



Smothers day: Florence Pugh as murderous Katherine.

EXTRA SPOILER WARNING

MURDER BY NUMBERS

How *Lady Macbeth* director William Oldroyd filmed the year's most harrowing scene

WORDS **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**

THAT OLD MOVIE adage about never working with children doesn't cut much ice with William Oldroyd. The director's debut film, *Lady Macbeth*, a masterfully chilly adaptation of Nikolai Leskov's 19th century novella, saw him —and consider this the mother of all spoiler warnings — tackle one of the most challenging scenes imaginable. In it, Anton Palmer's young ward, Teddy, is suffocated on a sofa by Florence Pugh's ruthless heiress Katherine, with some help from her lover Sebastian (Cosmo Jarvis), to free her from a potential threat to her fortune. It's gruelling and deeply uncomfortable viewing, and to make it work Oldroyd needed the full cooperation of Palmer, then just seven years old.

"Trust was key," explains Oldroyd, "so it was important that Anton got to know Florence, Cosmo and me a bit before we started shooting."

To capture the murder itself, Oldroyd played to his young actor's competitive nature. "Anton was never going to understand what he had to do in the film, and his mother didn't want him to know, so we broke the scene down and made it a series of games he had to win." First, Palmer was bet that he couldn't lie still and count to a hundred. "Then I said, 'When Florence touches your head, you've got to jump up and run to the door — I bet you can't get there,'" recalls Oldroyd, "so Florence was physically pulling him down. Then I bet him that when she touched his shoulder, he couldn't lie still and count to a hundred." Palmer was game. "'I bet you I can,' he'd say."

For Pugh, the murder was understandably "difficult and stressful" to shoot. "I was in control of this kid who has a manic amount of energy and thinks it's a game," she remembers. "But we did it and it was great that Will wanted to get it in one take. It kept it pretty short."

The final three-minute shot — one of three takes allowed by Palmer's watching mother — has divided audiences. "Some have been angry," notes Oldroyd, "because up until that point they were rooting for Katherine and [suddenly] it's no longer clear cut. Other people feel, no, it was necessary."

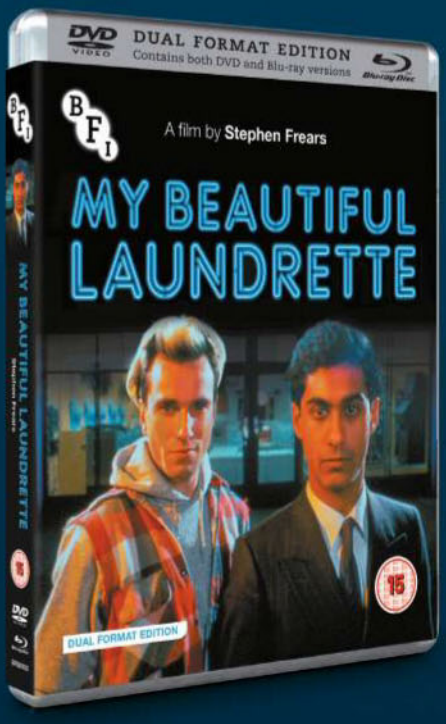
As for Palmer's take on the matter, we'll ask him. When he's legally allowed to see the film in 2028.

***LADY MACBETH* IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD**

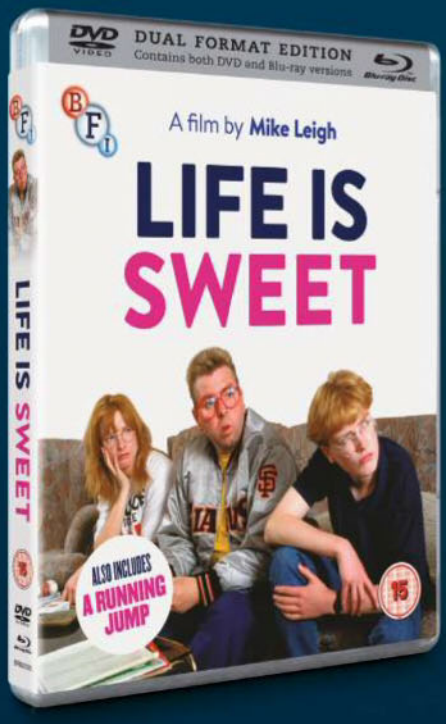
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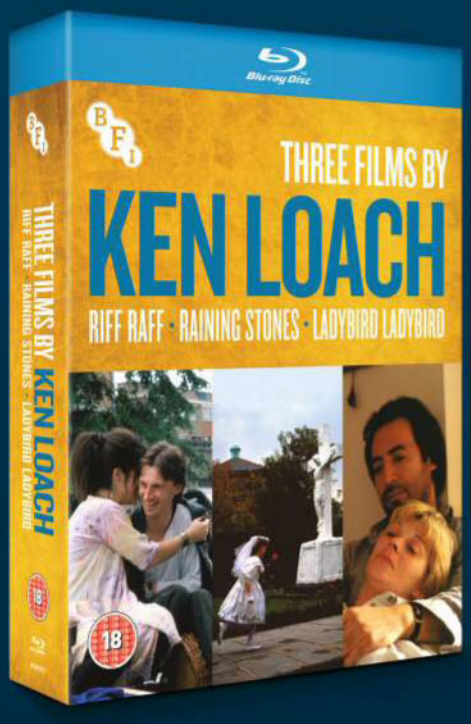
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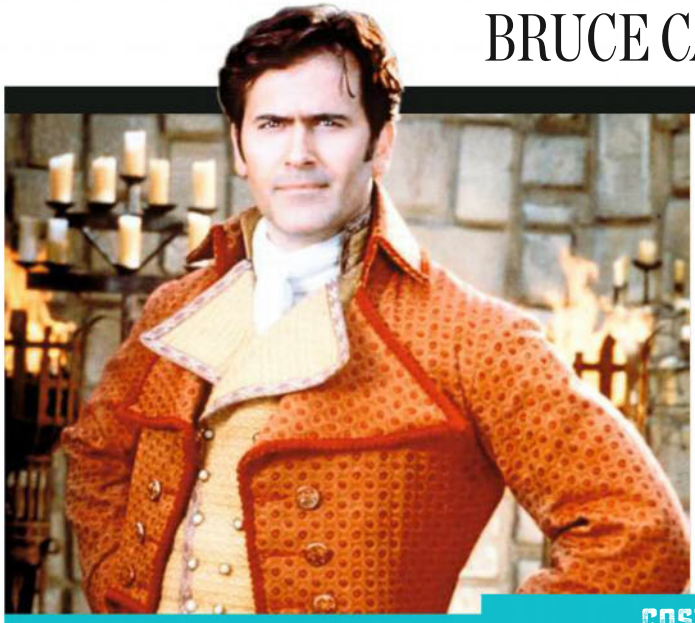
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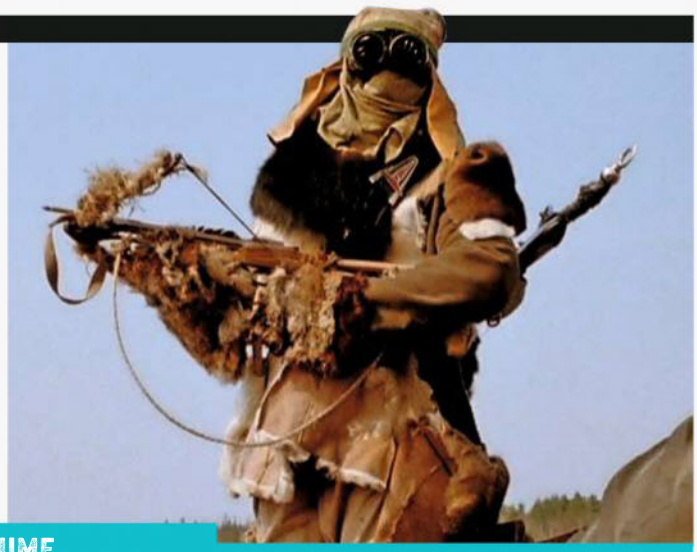
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BEST OF TIMES | WORST OF TIMES

BRUCE CAMPBELL

WORDS **CHRIS HEWITT**





COSTUME

I looked like a swashbuckler in *Jack Of All Trades*. It was very dashing and fairly comfortable, except the cape, which was too fucking heavy. They took out half the weight. I said, "I gotta fight in this cape, baby!"

For *Mindwarp,* I played a post-apocalyptic Jeremiah Johnson in a costume made of car parts. My goggles were car heating vents. But I was hitting on the costume designer so I was somewhat distracted.

LOCATION

Sundown: The Vampire In Retreat. About '88 we shot that, in Moab, Utah. I'm a huge fan of the West and it completely made me eat up Utah. It's just spectacular in its desolation and isolation and its solitude. I've since come back multiple times to that town as a civilian because it was such a spectacular location.



The worst was probably Detroit, Michigan, shooting *Crimewave*. I was directing the second unit. We were on a cherrypick bucket up over the Detroit river in the middle of winter and it was 30 degrees below Fahrenheit. Your mouth starts to freeze up so when you start to talk, you sound really drunk, but you're not.

AUDITION

I've gotten three jobs from auditions in my entire life. The first one was *Knots Landing*, playing Michael York's assistant for two episodes. It was 1987 — the first thing I auditioned for in Hollywood. I didn't do TV for another five years because of how horrifying the experience was.

I met with Ed Zwick for *Thirtysomething*. He was mixing a movie while I waited. I came into his office and said, "You should fix [those] cricket sound effects on reel three." My manager said, "Ed Zwick just told me your meeting is the reason he doesn't like to take meetings with actors."

DEATH SCENE

Bubba Ho-Tep. Elvis is lying there, looks up and sees the stars align. It says, "All is well." It was a poignant ending to a ridiculous film. I added a, "Thank you very much." That's how Elvis would die.

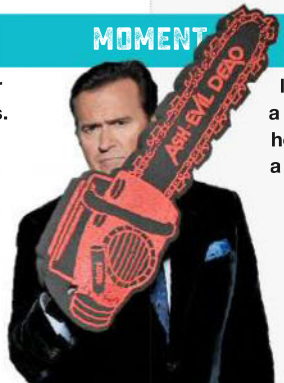




I vomited leeches in *Mindwarp*. They were rubber fishing lure leeches with fake blood you had to hold in your mouth without gagging. But I met my wife Ida [on the film], so that worked out.

MOMENT

The premiere of *Ash Vs Evil Dead* in Hollywood. We never had a Hollywood premiere for any of the *Evil Dead* movies. We shut down two blocks of Hollywood Boulevard and Iggy Pop sang for a thousand screaming fans. I was like, "Okay, *Evil Dead*, you've arrived." This shitty little movie that had been made fun of for years had finally got into the Hollywood mainstream. That cracked me up.



I got fired from *Crimewave* and I was cast as the lead. I did a screen test, but because the budget was bigger and it wasn't horror, some studio guy wasn't going to have it. I had to take a secondary role as a slimy heel and watch some other actor [Reed Birney] do the role. That was a shitty experience.

BRUCE CAMPBELL'S BOOK *HAIL TO THE CHIN* IS OUT NOW

ALLSTAR, ALPHA, GETTY

DOING THE ROUNDS

The Bleeder's Liev Schreiber on telling a real-life boxing story without pulling any punches

WORDS **CHRIS HEWITT**



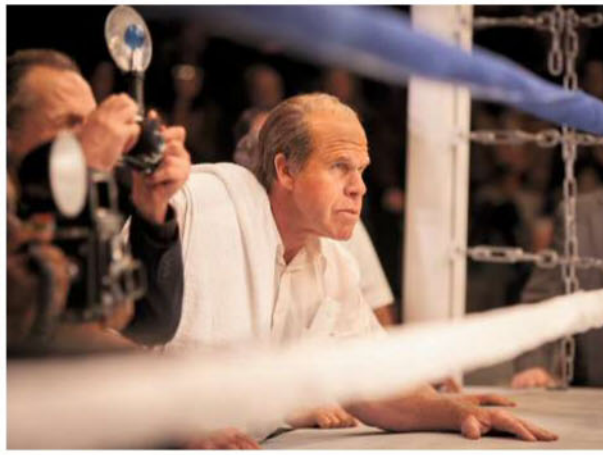
Clockwise from here: Liev Schreiber as Chuck Wepner; Against real-life sparring partner Pooch Hall, cast as Muhammad Ali; Ali KOs Wepner in 1975; Ron Perlman as Wepner's trainer and manager, Al Braverman.

LIEV SCHREIBER KNOWS boxing. He fell in love with the sport as a kid when he saw the great Muhammad Ali fight George Foreman. He played a Polish boxer in the Robin Williams movie, *Jakob The Liar*, when he was a young actor making his bones in the business. And for years he's moonlighted as the voice of HBO Sports, lending his smooth tones to documentaries about Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather. Yet one big boxing story had passed him by.

"I was surprised I didn't know who Chuck was," says Schreiber of Chuck Wepner, one of boxing's great nearly men. A working-class kid from the streets of New Jersey, Wepner, aka The Bayonne Bleeder, challenged Ali for the world heavyweight title in 1975, but was (technically) knocked out with just 19 seconds to go in the final round. It's a hell of a story, and when Schreiber was first sent an early draft by producer Michael Tollin around ten years ago, he was intrigued enough to not only sign on to star in *The Bleeder* (known in the US as *Chuck*), but also as co-writer ("I just did some polishes," he demurs). And he stayed attached to the film across a long journey to production. "We can all understand really intimately the dramatic journey that is a 15-round prize fight. I think we rally behind the people who are willing to risk that and celebrate their tenacity and ability. I think there are terrific metaphors for life in boxing."

That notion, of course, has been kicking around for decades, and certainly since *Rocky* thrust Sylvester Stallone and boxing into the spotlight in 1976. Wepner has often been suggested as an inspiration for Rocky Balboa, whose indefatigability defined a generation, and there are certainly parallels between the two men. In a weird quirk, Stallone even shows up as a character in *The Bleeder*. Played by Morgan Spector, we see him taking Wepner under his wing, and trying to secure him a role in *Rocky II*. And Schreiber even enlisted the help of Stallone when he was prepping the movie. "He's been incredibly generous," says Schreiber, who spoke multiple times with Stallone. "I really enjoyed our conversations, particularly around his process. I think *Rocky* was a metaphor for his tumultuous career up to that point. That was really fascinating and led us away from the idea that this was a pure boxing film."

Schreiber and the film's director, Philippe Falardeau, had loftier ambitions for *The Bleeder*, reflected in its excellent supporting cast, which









includes Ron Perlman, Elisabeth Moss, and Schreiber's former partner, Naomi Watts. "There was something about Chuck's story, a kind of cautionary tale about fame and celebrity that was interesting for me," explains the actor. "Sometimes we maybe laid a little hard into his drug-taking and partying, but that was part of the story we were interested in. He's a very winning personality, so we left some of the darker elements of Chuck's life out."

In the States, the film was fairly well-received by critics, but didn't fare that well at the box office (grossing just $320,725), which might explain why it's bypassed cinemas in the UK. It's an interesting, grubbily realistic addition to the ranks of boxing movies, with Wepner a relatable protagonist. For all Schreiber and Falardeau's dramatic goals, though, it's still very much a boxing movie, with its fair share of fight scenes. "There are two problems with boxing on film," says Schreiber, who, at 49, is a decade older than Wepner was when he fought Ali. "One, actors never look like fighters, no matter how hard you train or what six-pack you have. In my case, it helped that Chuck had this lumbering forward momentum that wasn't so hard to recreate. The other problem is contact. You can tell when somebody's not getting hit."

The simple solution: to get hit. So Schreiber's sparring partner, Pooch Hall, was cast as Ali. "He's very good at controlling his power, but you see the sweat pop off me and my hair go back. You can tell I'm being hit. Does it hurt? Sure!" Then again, Wepner's is a rocky story of pain and persistence. It was always going to require a little of both to get it made.

GETTY

***THE BLEEDER* IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD**

KIM NEWMAN'S VIDEO DUNGEON

He has crossed oceans of time to watch schlocky movies





THE BREAK-OUT: THE EVIL WITHIN

WRITER-DIRECTOR ANDREW Getty — of the oil billionaire family — began work on *The Evil Within* in 2002, shot most of it circa 2006 and was still tinkering with his self-financed masterpiece when he died in 2015. Completed by collaborators, it now emerges as a very strange beast.

With its generic title, key horror star Michael Berryman (*The Hills Have Eyes*) and a developmentally challenged serial killer protagonist, *The Evil Within* could have cluttered VHS shelves along with many *Puppet Master*, *Wishmaster* or *Mirror Mirror* sequels. But, even without its vanity project status, it'd be remarkable, unusual and fascinating.

Dennis (Frederick Koehler), a child savant who has become a brain-damaged adult, is cared for by guilt-ridden brother John (Sean Patrick Flanery), whose long-suffering girlfriend Lydia (Dina Meyer) complains, "When I said I wanted a baby, I meant the cute kind not the 30-year-old masturbating kind." The stuttering, shy Dennis' articulate, demonic doppelgänger appears in an antique mirror and persuades him to become a serial killer — first of pets, then of children, finally of adults. Berryman is also an incarnation of a dark force in Dennis' mind — in a bizarre hallucination, the demonic presence puts a zip in Dennis' back, then takes off his skin whole and pulls it over his own body. A giant spider-thing also pops out of the protagonist's imagination.

Getty crafts astonishing special effects and has a knack for striking non sequitur talk — even the glaring plot lapses and awkward transitions are justifiable in a film which follows the logic of a nightmare. Not for everyone, but not to be dismissed as self-indulgent camp either.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"He has been spotted armed with a meat cleaver in one hand and his genitals in the other. We return you to your usual programming."
Blood Diner

THE ROUND-UP: DO THE TWISTS

DESPITE THE WARNINGS, cabins in the woods remain popular holiday destinations among doomed characters in horror films. In Mauro Borrelli's *Final Recall*, a familiar quintet of bland young folks are severely inconvenienced by a global alien attack (big saucers looming out of clouds). Wesley Snipes twitches and rasps as a crazed ex-astronaut/alien abductee eager for payback when the invaders return to his neck of the woods. Derivative and incoherent, it has decent aliens and the finale springs some interesting ideas.

Sheldon Wilson's *The Unspoken* (aka *The Haunting Of Briar House*) also saves its best plot twists for the end and is littered with familiar ideas, but has better performances, fresher characters and an unusual collision of genres. Misfit teen Jodelle Ferland (*Case 39*, *Tideland*) takes a job looking after a new creepy kid (Sunny Suljic) in the local haunted house. Apart from poltergeist activity, her job is made difficult by drug gangsters who concealed their stash in the basement. *The Unspoken* offers gruesome phenomena, jump scares and creepy telekinetic effects, and its last-reel revelation is memorably and ingeniously outrageous.



MOVIE MEMOIRS

Ally Sheedy's Stephanie with AI pal Number, later Johnny, 5.

ALAMY

Sali Hughes on the films that shaped her life

#16 THE CHILDHOOD DATE FILM: SHORT CIRCUIT



ILLUSTRATION **DAVID MAHONEY**

THE YEAR WAS 1986, the location was Blackwood High Street Maxime, the film was *Short Circuit*. The protagonist, a fugitive military robot who developed human emotions and consequently had to hide from the evil authorities; his saviour, Steve Guttenberg, riding on the massive success of the *Police Academy* movies. The love interest was original manic pixie dream girl, Ally Sheedy. Not that any of this really mattered. Because I merely pretended to watch *Short Circuit* while waiting agonisingly, achingly, for Jonathan Morgan to reach over and so much as skim the shoulder of my Kappa trackie, so the main performance could finally begin.

There are many good reasons why seeing a film remains a fail-safe date option at any age, but there's something about a romantic cinema trip that so perfectly indulges the adolescent psyche. The adjacent seating (like a classroom) rather than face-to-face (like the headmaster's office) means there's no cause for awkward eye contact, and provides effortless opportunity for embrace, as well as easy access to the soft-cup training bra. The dark, forgiving auditorium hides blushes, spots, leaky pits and shaky legs. The need for silence means no grappling for common ground over chart music, comics, the most annoying regular on *Grange Hill*; no requirement to be funny or charming, no pressure to entertain with as-yet undeveloped small-talk skills, not even any real obligation to show an interest in one another beyond the assurance of a mutual willingness to suck face. There's a sense of conspiracy, of having found a secret enclosure where puberty hormones can run wild with impunity.

The teenage date film must be chosen with care. It should be watchable but not so gripping as to detract from the purpose of the visit. There must be no sex scenes that cause each dater to sink deep into his or her own chair, mortified at the thought of moving past second base, while he simultaneously conceals his involuntary physical reaction with a Slush Puppy. Military robots in *Short Circuit*, Stay Puft marshmallow men in *Ghostbusters*, regressing pensioners in *Cocoon* — these are reassuringly sexless and consequently ideal. Duration is also key. A too-long epic runs the risk of too much build-up, boredom, or a scorching case of snogging rash. Ninety minutes is the optimum date-movie length (it's arguably the optimum any-movie length, let's be honest) because it provides the ideal framework for a neat, three-act drama. Act I: Will He Put His Arm Around Me? Act II: OMG He's Put His Arm Around Me, Just Act Natural. Then Act III: The Explosive Finale. The atmosphere, so tense and electric, means that a mere shift in one's seat, or a tentative reach for the shared popcorn, causes the meeting of mouths and a good half-hour of wet, ferocious, urgent kissing and groping, before the lights come up and the magic makes way for six McNuggets and the awkward dissection of a film neither of you remembers watching.

But now I do. I remember *Short Circuit* not as a serviceable family comedy starring a relentlessly talkative lump of tin, but as the sexiest film of all time. Because no movie since has made me feel quite so excited, so tense, and ultimately, so completely alive. I heard recently that the 1938 Maxime cinema had been restored and reopened after decades of dereliction. I envy the new generation of kids who'll get to walk through its doors and see their hormones short circuit.

THE DEFENDERS

The best of Netflix's Marvel team-up



1_HALL & OATS

The Netflix/Marvel shows have long had standout fight sequences set in hallways, and the first time all four Defenders (Charlie Cox, Krysten Ritter, Mike Colter, Finn Jones) come together to take on a resurrected Elektra (Elodie Yung) more than holds its own. It took three episodes to get them here, but it's worth the wait.



2_ELEKTRA GLIDE IN BLUE

Episode five is, for the most part, one long fight sequence as the Defenders, erm, defend themselves in a Chinese restaurant. But it ends poignantly with Elektra returning to Matt Murdock's apartment in search of her lost memories, and curling up in a ball on his bed.



3_IRON FISTING

Before The Defenders premiered, there was much angst about the prominent role of Finn Jones' Danny Rand/Iron Fist, following the lukewarm reception to his solo show. Episode six, in which the other Defenders and Scott Glenn's Stick beat Danny up, was shot before the furore, but feels like a nod to his critics.

***THE DEFENDERS* IS ON NETFLIX NOW**



Nightwing (Loren Lester) joins Harley Quinn (Melissa Rauch) and Batman (Kevin Conroy). **Below:** Floronic Man (Kevin Michael Richardson) and Poison Ivy (Paget Brewster).

STILL BATS AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

Kevin Conroy, the voice of Batman, on his 25th anniversary

WORDS **CHRIS HEWITT**



KEVIN CONROY RECENTLY had an unusual experience whilst out walking in New York. "A cop car put its siren on as I was crossing the street," recalls the actor. "I thought, 'Oh man, am I going to get a jaywalking ticket?' Then a cop leans out the window and goes, 'We want a picture of Batman! Come on, Batman!' Did I do the voice?" He breaks into a booming baritone. "'Please, officer, don't give me a ticket!'"

Conroy has been doing that voice for 25 years, playing Bruce Wayne and his vigilante alter-ego first in *Batman: The Animated Series*, then through numerous follow-up shows, video games, and the odd feature-length movie such as the new *Batman And Harley Quinn*. He's played the role for longer than the tenures of Adam West, Michael Keaton, Val Kilmer, George Clooney, Christian Bale and Ben Affleck combined and, for many, his silky smooth version is the definitive take on the Caped Crusader. Yet until recently, most people couldn't have picked him out of a Batline-up. "But because of the internet, everybody now recognises everybody," he says. "Faces are no longer anonymous."

With that face, long and handsome, Conroy could certainly have played the live-action Bat. But it was his voice that was his passport, even though he freely admits that when he showed up for the audition in 1992, he was virtually clueless about the Caped Crusader. "I was a New York stage actor," he explains. "I only knew the Adam West show. 'Zap! Pow! Bam!' Bruce Timm [co-creator of *The Animated Series*] told me that Batman's parents were murdered in front of him. That changed everything. I approached it as a classic, tragic character and went to the deepest, darkest place I could find in my voice. I've continued to approach it that way."

There's no sense that Conroy is ready to hang up his Batmicrophone just yet, even as he enters his early sixties, nor that *Batman And Harley Quinn* is the culmination of his work with Timm. The new movie teams a reluctant Bats with Harley, a character who has become a mighty oak after her humble debut in *The Animated Series*, most recently with her film-stealing appearance in *Suicide Squad*. "They really balance each other well," says Conroy of the pairing which, crucially, still sees Batman come first in the title. "Oh, keep the billing," he laughs. "For now at least..."

***BATMAN AND HARLEY QUINN* IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD**



ALAMY



STORY OF THE SHOT

SHANE

WORDS **IAN FREER**

IF THE ONLY thing you know about *Shane* is the classic last line — "Shane, come back!" — then you have a treat in store. George Stevens' 1953 Western is a masterpiece, a profound morality tale exploring the thin lines between good and evil and the consequences of violence. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the film's touching final moments when mysterious stranger Shane (Alan Ladd), who has become an integral part of the Starrett family life, says goodbye to little Joey (Brandon deWilde) after murdering the bad guys. Off he rides, ignoring little Joey's cries.

"The line at the end is, 'There's no living with a killing,' like you cannot change the mould of someone," says Edward Countryman, author of the BFI Film Classics book on *Shane*. "There has been an intervention. The stranger has come in, he has found a disturbed world and intervened in it. He toys with remaining but he cannot stay there. There is no place for him in the settled valley."

While *Shane* was conceived as a vehicle for Ladd, it was his young co-star deWilde who truly shone, the boy earning an Oscar nomination for his work on the film. Born into a theatrical family, deWilde was an award-winning Broadway actor aged seven (praised by John Gielgud), and Jean Arthur, who played Joey's mother, was said to have marvelled at deWilde's ability to keep doing what Stevens asked — ad infinitum. "John Ford shot so you could only edit it one way," says Countryman. "Well, that was not George Stevens. The man shot and shot and shot and shot and shot. And shot some more just in case." Shooting the finale, deWilde finally lost his patience. Every time Ladd spoke his lines, deWilde crossed his eyes and stuck out his tongue. Finally, Ladd snapped and called to the boy's father, "Make that kid stop or I'll beat him over the head with a brick." DeWilde quickly fell in line.

The scene's encapsulation of the troubled lonely hero who must leave played into the likes of *The Searchers* and *Pale Rider* (a virtual remake). The film has also rippled throughout superhero culture, both in light-hearted ways — the '60s *Batman* TV series featured a villain called Shame in 'Come Back, Shame' — and in more substantial ways. Not only does *Shane* play a pivotal role in James Mangold's *Logan* — Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart) watches it in a hotel room and explains it is almost 100 years old in 2029 — but Laura's (Dafne Keen) monologue at Logan's grave is taken word-for-word from the film; a poignant homage to Shane's long goodbye.

"I am always reminded, through Joey and this film, of one of the most bittersweet facts," Mangold wrote in an introduction to *Shane* for the Academy Of Motion Picture Arts And Sciences. "That the course of our lives can be profoundly changed by folks who sometimes cannot stay. The temporary nature of some relationships in our lives does not diminish their power, and in fact sometimes enlarges them."

***SHANE* IS OUT NOW ON DVD AND DOWNLOAD**

BODY AND MINDHORN

Julian Barratt and Simon Farnaby — writers and stars of *Mindhorn* — on the film's standout looks

WORDS **CHRIS HEWITT**

"IF YOU GET the look of a character right," says Julian Barratt, co-writer and star of *Mindhorn*, "you don't have to do much. The comedy is baked in by the costume." And when it came to putting together the look for Mindhorn, the hero of an '80s TV detective show, Richard Thorncroft, the actor who plays him and Clive Parnevik, Thorncroft's former stuntman-turned-nemesis, Barratt and fellow writer/star Simon Farnaby were doing a whole lot of baking.



THE HAIR

BARRATT: That's a wig. A good wig for the early days, and a bad wig, which was supposed to look like a wig, for later Thorncroft. We didn't want to get too Jason King. I shaved my head for the part, not that it was necessary. I found that out later.

THE MOUSTACHE

BARRATT: It's *Magnum P.I.*, basically. We thought he could have a beard, but I can't grow a full, thick beard. Mine's a bit straggly. But the moustache is fine, and I could bulk it up to give it the requisite masculinity.

THE SHIRT

BARRATT: He's gone double denim. It's a classic look from the '80s, based on a lot of adverts about rugged men who go their own way. And he tucks them in. You wouldn't trust a man who doesn't tuck his shirts in.

THE HAIR

FARNABY: If you took Sylvester Stallone and Dolph Lundgren, the great enemies of *Rocky IV*, universally acknowledged as the best one, you might find a hair comparison there. There's a bit of Hasselhoff in there too.

THE TOP

FARNABY: Suzie Harman, our costume designer, came up with that. Clive is sporty and active, and there's a bit of Bruce Lee in there. The trimming is very *Game Of Death*.

THE SHOES

FARNABY: When I was 15 I got into a bit of trouble at school, for something innocuous. I got hauled in front of a vice squad for the North Yorkshire Dales, and they had nothing to model themselves on except *Miami Vice*. Deck shoes with no socks, and short trousers. That stuck with me.

THE JEANS

BARRATT: As high-waisted as you could get. We had trouble getting those old-fashioned high-waisted cuts. You need to have a long zip, so you can proudly strut about.



CLIVE PARNEVIK

BRUCE MINDHORN

THE EYEPATCH

FARNABY: The eyepatch sees when people are telling the truth. Initially, it was a nose that could smell the truth, but that lasted about an afternoon. It's not very cinematic to go around sniffing people.
BARRATT: It's not great wearing an eyepatch. You forget how much you rely on the three-dimensional perception of the world.

THE ROLLNECK

FARNABY: A rollneck is a very '80s thing. And we thought Mindhorn wouldn't be bothered with a shirt. He'd be too busy for buttons.

THE JACKET

BARRATT: In the script we wrote "a beige jacket" and we arrived at tan. There were a lot of conferences back and forth, getting different swatches of colours to look at. We fought to keep it tan. They pushed us towards a muffin and we pushed back with faun. It was pretty close to the knuckle.

THE TROUSERS

FARNABY: From day one we wrote, "Mindhorn wears Farah slacks." I was obsessed with Farah trousers in the old days. They were very thick and had a line down the middle and were ever so slightly flared.

***MINDHORN* IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD**

THE SHOES

BARRATT: They were slip-ons. Very comfortable. Maybe too comfortable. There was a scene where Richard wouldn't do a scene without his shoes, "because my character doesn't stop at the knees". One day I did a shot and I had some trainers on and it just felt all wrong. I had to go and get the shoes. You could see people looking at me, thinking, "He's gone over the edge."

THE EMPIRE VERDICT

MINDHORN
★★★
CERT **15**

What we said: "Looking all too convincingly like video-era rubbish TV, *Mindhorn* delivers regular proper laughs and wrings just enough drops of pathos to scrape by."
Notable extras: A Barratt/Farnaby commentary, *You Can't Handcuff The Wind* music video, a featurette.

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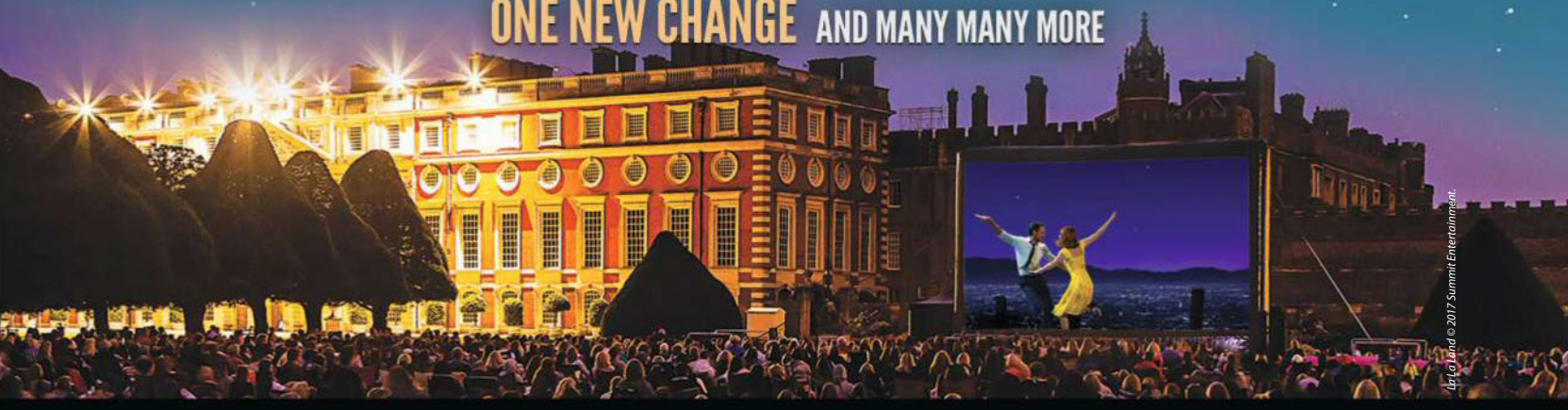
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BINGEWATCH

The continuing adventures of our marathon man: he's been known to swallow a box set whole

THIS MONTH:
AMERICAN HORROR STORY: ROANOKE

WORDS **SIMON CROOK**
ILLUSTRATION **PETER STRAIN**

AFTER GHOSTS, ASYLUMS, witches, freak shows and haunted hotels, the latest season of anthology series *American Horror Story* was hyped by its showrunner Ryan Murphy as a radical rebirth. It sounded like pre-release puff. In some ways, it's business as usual. Keeping with the show's tradition, season six is inspired by true events — in this case, the Roanoke New World colony that mysteriously evaporated in the 1590s. What's rogue is the format: the series unravels as a spot-on *Paranormal Witness* spoof.

To North Carolina then, where married couple Shelby and Matt Miller (Sarah Paulson and Cuba Gooding Jr) are happily settling into their lovely new home that looks as welcoming as an abattoir. When sister-in-law Lee (Angela Bassett) comes to visit, the three fall victim to a relentless supernatural blitzkrieg. Cue narrative ping-pong as the plot bounces between the talking head victims (André Holland, Lily Rabe, Adina Porter) and their re-enacting counterparts. The first episode hits the ground screaming: there's a hot-tub ghost attack, the sky raining teeth and homicidal pig-men (swine-otaurs are the show's recurring bogeymen). By episode two, the series' villain emerges from the woods — Kathy Bates' Butcher, a cleaver-wielding Roanoke phantom with a spirit-army of New World zombies.

This is horror played at warp-speed — each episode comes pre loaded with six jump scares and three reveals. Just when you think you know where it's heading, the show lobs in psycho ghost nurses or a cannibal clan. It's a bit like watching a campfire ghost story burst into a wildfire but the show does take time to develop its mythology. 'Chapter Four', the Explainer Episode, links its random horrors into a surprisingly coherent pagan legend involving druids, Blood Moons and a human-sacrifice cult. (The show's biggest mystery, Bates' pigeon-through-a-mangle accent, is never explained. Where's she from? Derby? Dublin? Dundee? Dartford? *All* of them?)

The mock-doc style is on-the-nose but ace, the gore splashy but what makes this such a riot are the brash steals: *Amityville*, *Hostel*, *Blair Witch*, *Poltergeist*, and *Texas Chainsaw* and many more are all ransacked. This is jukebox horror, and fabulously brazen. When the Millers abruptly escape with five episodes left, you're wondering: where's there to go?

The solution has my head rotating like an owl on a fidget spinner. In the unreal real world, the show's become such a ratings hit the channel launches a follow-up series. "Like *Big Brother* with scares!" screams the producer as the actors playing the re-enactors and the original victims are moved into the actual haunted house, hoping to capture the real Roanoke ghouls on camera. In other words, mid-season, the show drops a meta-ton bomb, and it's absolutely nuts. Still, at this point I'm experiencing some weird aural delirium. What *are* those hideous chewing noises? Turns out it's the sound of a show eating itself to death. Having written itself into a corner, there's nowhere to go but headbutt itself against the wall, duplicating the same old scares from a new POV perspective. Cuba Gooding Jr is a self-mocking blast as an ego-puffed actor but the show collapses into a shapeless mess of a hide-and-shriek, cruelly stretched out for four, knackering episodes.

By the time the finale lands, Adina Porter's lone survivor is flung into a true-crime take-off, an *Oprah* parody then a *Ghost Hunters* spoof, meaning we're now inside a show-within-a-show-within-a-show-within-a-show-within-a-show. Head hurting? Mine too, after ten episodes. If you follow a climax with a climax then another climax, you end up with an anti-climax, which is exactly where the slot-filling epilogue ends up. The ballsy move ends up utter meta-bollocks, but you can't ever accuse the show of playing safe.

***AMERICAN HORROR STORY: ROANOKE* IS OUT ON 11 SEPTEMBER ON DVD AND BLU-RAY**

JACKET REQUIRED

Stars Matthew Modine and Vincent D'Onofrio reflect on 30 years of *Full Metal Jacket*



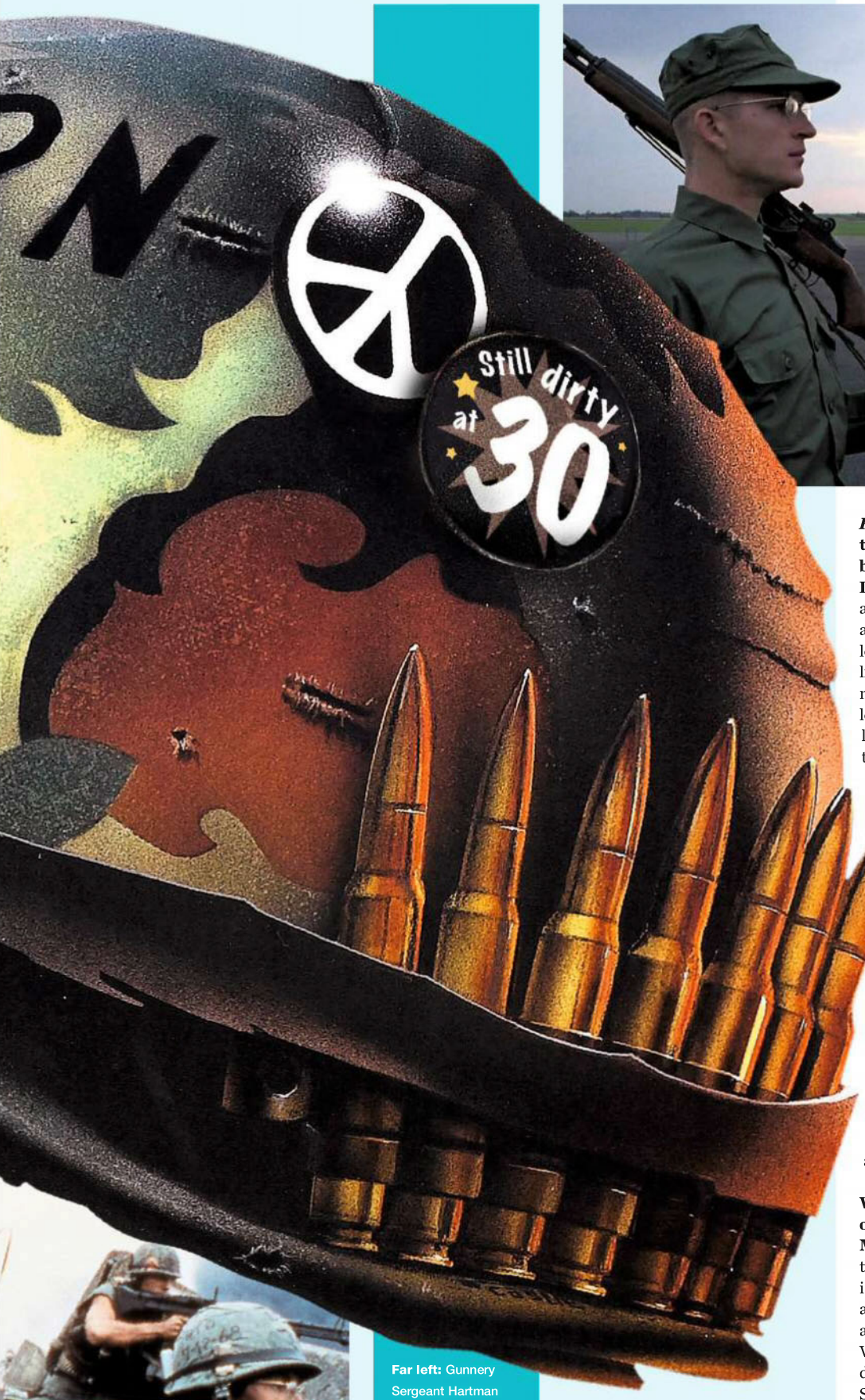
WORDS **IAN FREER**

BREAK OUT THE Full Metal Cake and get ready to blow out the Full Metal Candles — Stanley Kubrick's Vietnam War masterpiece, *Full Metal Jacket*, has just turned 30. One of the greatest and most profound "war is hell" movies in cinema history, it also launched the careers of two of its stars — Matthew Modine, as the raw and idealistic Private Joker, and Vincent D'Onofrio, tragic and terrifying as the bullied Private Pyle. Here the duo, who knew each other before filming began, reflect on the movie, working with Kubrick, and nearly walking off set.

Do you remember how you got the roles?
Matthew Modine: I was in a restaurant called The Source on Sunset Boulevard having breakfast with an actor, David Alan Grier, and there was a guy sitting about ten feet away, looking at me saying, "Fuck you, fuck you." David looked over his shoulder and said, "Oh, that's Val Kilmer, he's a really nice guy." So David went over and started talking to him and he got me to come over and say hello. I said, "Hi, my name's Matthew Modine." And he goes, "Yeah, I know who you are. I'm fucking sick of you." I said, "Look, I'm the youngest of seven kids, I've been fighting my whole life; I have no problem going outside if you want to go outside." He said, "I am sick of you because you got *Vision Quest*, *Mrs. Soffel* and *Birdy*, and now you're doing Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*." I said, "I am not going to apologise to you or anyone for the work that I've done. But I can tell you right now I am not doing Stanley Kubrick's film." Of course, when I finished my breakfast, I rushed outside and put 20 quarters into a payphone to call my manager in New York and asked him to send *Vision Quest* to Stanley Kubrick, and I'd call Alan Parker in London to see if he could send him *Birdy*. How I got the job I still don't know, but Val Kilmer certainly started a fire.

Vincent D'Onofrio: The first time I heard about *Full Metal Jacket* was because of Matthew, and then, of course, Stanley cast me in the role. I've said this to Matthew before and he just brushes it off, but there is a very, very good chance I wouldn't have my career if it wasn't for those two guys.

Modine: I brush it off because you can open the door for anybody but it's the person who walks into the room who gets the job. So I am very happy and honoured that I opened the door, but Vince owns his career.





Born to drill: Private Joker (Matthew Modine) and Private Pyle (Vincent D'Onofrio) on the parade ground.



Far left: Gunnery Sergeant Hartman (R. Lee Ermey) unleashes hell over a jelly doughnut. **Left:** The Marines under fire in Vietnam (actually the Isle Of Dogs in East London).

***Full Metal Jacket* was the film that started this whole thing of actors going through boot camp. What are your memories of that?**

D'Onofrio: It's not the same boot camp you hear about these days where guys go through rigorous amounts of physical stuff. Our boot camp was learning all the things you need to know to look like a Marine. For me, it was learning how to march and putting on weight at the same time, learning how to do Monkey Patrol with the rifles, learning how to take a rifle apart and put it back together blindfolded. There are very specific things about the Marine Corps we had to follow. All of that stuff, when it came to etiquette, and how we behaved, we were taught all that by Lee Ermey.

What are the R. Lee Ermey insults you remember?

Modine: [*Shouts*] "I BET YOU'RE THE KIND OF GUY THAT WOULD FUCK A PERSON IN THE ASS AND NOT EVEN HAVE THE GODDAMN COMMON COURTESY TO GIVE HIM A REACH-AROUND!"

D'Onofrio: [*Laughs*] That's one. There are so many. The shouting was fine when Lee hadn't just finished lunch. There were certain days when he'd just drink coffee. If you lend yourself to it, it's really happening. He was amazing in those scenes.

What are your most vivid memories of Kubrick?

Modine: I think Stanley was a different person to each one of us. He was whoever he had to be in that moment, from a technician to an actor and then the different personalities from actor to actor. He was a different person to Vincent than he was to me because there were different requirements. What I took away from Stanley was that he was a Jewish kid from the Bronx who loved making movies. He was passionate about life, loved his family and his animals, and really, *really* loved making movies. I believe he wished he'd made more of them.

D'Onofrio: Stanley was very kind to me. He was never nasty to me about anything. I didn't ›



Right: Stanley Kubrick calls the shots on the often freezing London set of *Full Metal Jacket*. **Below (top to bottom):** Private Pyle has his famous breakdown in the showers; Private Joker has a close shave.





get to know him very well. He invited us over to his house to watch movies. We watched *The Purple Rose Of Cairo* over there. He had these two big projectors and he would change the reels himself. He opened the fridge up and we had these grenade-sized Heinekens we used to drink. He also told me some really personal things, about me and what my career might turn into, that I would never repeat but stuck with me my whole life. I was shocked when he did that. To be frank, there is one particular thing he said to me that absolutely is true about what has happened to my life. He pegged my career in one sentence to me. I looked at him like he was out of his fucking mind. I look back at it today as a 58-year-old man and the long career I've had because of him. And he nailed it perfectly in one sentence. For me, I was blessed to be there and I was treated really well.

What was your experience with Kubrick's endless takes?

Modine: All that preparation he did was all he needed in order to be able to tell a story. There was one story he told about people talking about the number of takes he does — as if it mattered. He said you would never go to Beethoven and say, "Hey, Beethoven, how many notes in that concerto?" Or to Picasso, "How many strokes in that?" He said it was just absurd. The process of making a film is the same kind of exploration into art as a musician or a painter. So why should you consider the number of takes important? What's important is you've found the one you needed in order to tell your story.

D'Onofrio: I never had any problem with it. In the boot camp stuff, there was not one time we did anything different from any other movie. The blanket party scene I did somewhere around nine times and that's normal for a scene like that. It was a long, difficult shot. Did I want to do it nine times? No. But actors are fucking lazy by nature, they never want to do things too much.

Modine: One more thing about the number of takes. When we finished the film, Arliss Howard [who played Private Cowboy] told me he was saying goodbye to Stanley and Stanley asked, "You are going to miss me?" Arliss said, "Of course, I am going to miss you." And Stanley said, "No. You are going to miss me when you are on another film set because you are going to be doing a scene and the director is going to say, 'Cut, we got it, let's move on.' And you are going to know we didn't get it and we shouldn't be moving on and you are going to miss me."

Matthew, is it true that he didn't let you leave for the birth of your first son?

Modine: No, he did let me go but it took some convincing. It took me threatening to cut my hand and say that I would have to go to the hospital to have my hand stitched up. I think what it was, I started on the wrong foot by saying, "I am not filming today. You are shooting the scene where Eightball [Dorian Harewood] is shot by the sniper and I won't work today." That was a bad approach: I was accusing him of doing a lot of takes and being slow. He was like, "What are you talking about? We're going to shoot Dorian and then we'll be onto you in the afternoon."

D'Onofrio: Or four months later...

Modine: So I started off on the wrong foot. My wife and I named our son Boman about five years before he was born. We were joking and said, "We'll have children and when it's a boy we'll call him Boy and when he's older we'll call him Man. And as a teenager we'll call him Boman." We thought it sounded like a baseball pitcher. [*Does announcer's voice*] "Now pitching for the New York Yankees — Boman Modine!" But what never occurred to me was Keir Dullea's character in *2001: A Space Odyssey* was Bowman. So I think he thought we were naming our son after Keir Dullea.

What are your memories of living in London during the shoot?

Modine: How bad the food was. It was explained to me by Kubrick's assistant Leon Vitali that England was still paying for World War II. It didn't make sense that you couldn't get good fruit and veg in England with all that grain and good soil. You'd go to buy carrots at the veg shop and they were like a 90-year-old man's erection.

D'Onofrio: At least they were erect.

What does the film mean to you now?

D'Onofrio: I've only seen it twice. I saw it when it first came out and then we had to do this commentary thing where you talk through the film. It's just an incredible comment on war and the human psyche. I think it's amazing. The reaction I get for the character I played is never-ending. There's not a man or a woman who recognises me for that film who has been in the military who can't help themselves but stop and say something about it. That's been happening for 30 years. So whenever anybody asks me what my favourite film is, many things go through my mind but I can't help but say *Full Metal Jacket* because of the experience I had.

Modine: People have expectations about Stanley Kubrick that are unrealistic when they first see his films. I think this film continues to have relevance because we continue to teach young people to go through military training and then go out and kill people. It is something very primordial and sadly necessary to vanquish people who want to kill us. I think Stanley Kubrick was saying if we continue to use violence to solve our problems, we'll be riding that bomb like Slim Pickens at the end of *Dr. Strangelove*, destroying life as we know it on this planet. We have to learn from the mistakes of our past if we're going to move forward as a conscious society that's achieving the goals of civilisation as we desire.

***FULL METAL JACKET* IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD**

THE EMPIRE VERDICT

FULL METAL JACKET

★★★★★

CERT **18**

What we said: "An assault rifle of a movie: cold, steely and precisely made."

Notable extras: Commentary featuring D'Onofrio and Ermey, Jon Ronson's documentary *Stanley Kubrick's Boxes*, and a Modine-centric featurette, *Between Good And Evil*.

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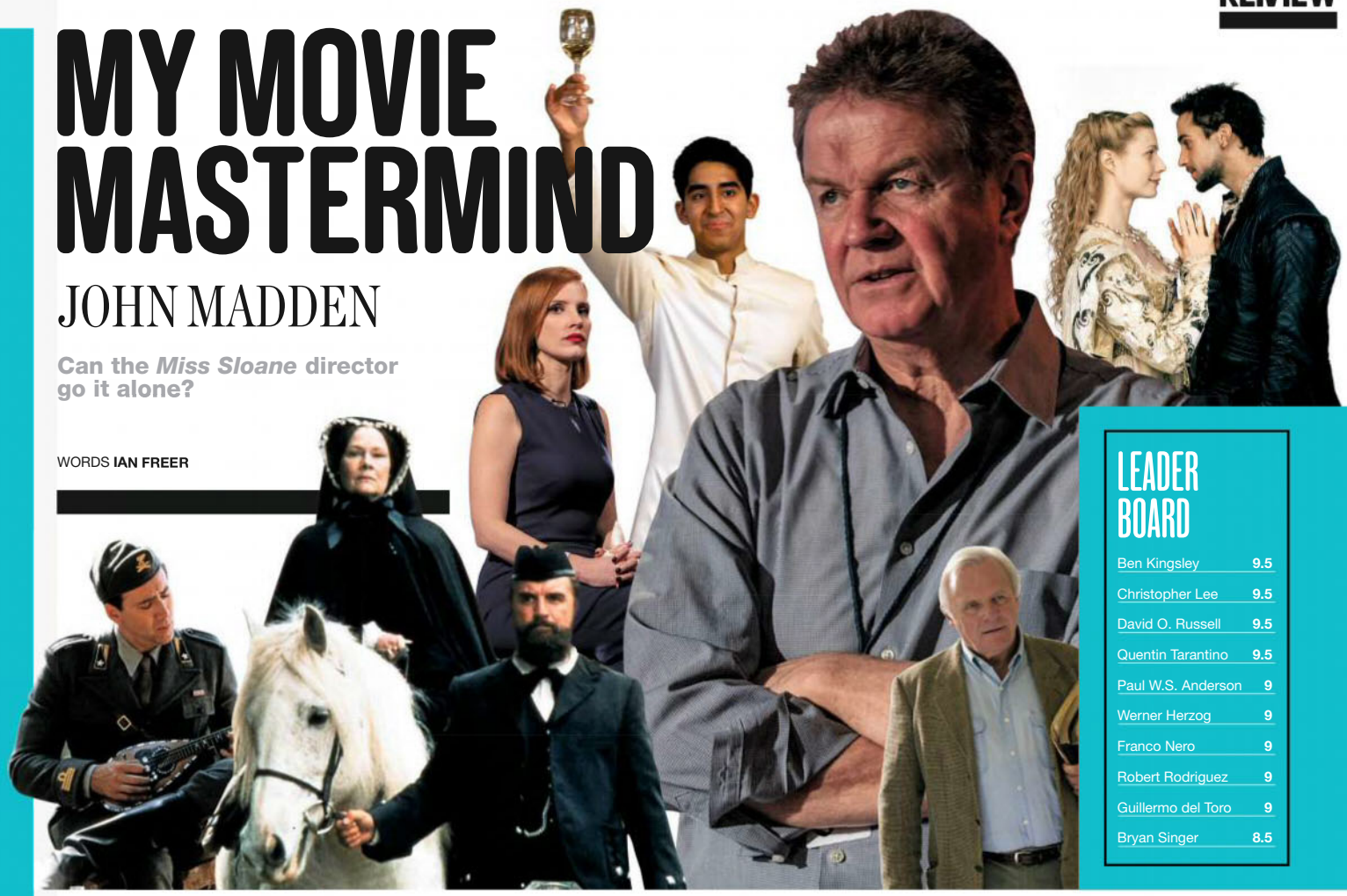
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MY MOVIE MASTERMIND

JOHN MADDEN

Can the *Miss Sloane* director go it alone?

WORDS **IAN FREER**



LEADER BOARD

Ben Kingsley	9.5
Christopher Lee	9.5
David O. Russell	9.5
Quentin Tarantino	9.5
Paul W.S. Anderson	9
Werner Herzog	9
Franco Nero	9
Robert Rodriguez	9
Guillermo del Toro	9
Bryan Singer	8.5

1 In *Miss Sloane*, when Schmidt (Mark Strong) says, "Dildos are illegal in Texas but Joe Public can walk into a sports store and walk out with a shotgun", how does Sloane (Jessica Chastain) respond?
She says, "That would explain the low rate of dildo-related murders in Texas."
Correct.

2 In *Shakespeare In Love*, what are the three things Henslowe (Geoffrey Rush) says audiences want?
"Comedy, love and a bit with a dog." That was a challenging film to make. People standing on the sidelines said it could never work. For the Weinsteins, it was about how to get an audience to see a film that had "Shakespeare" in the title. They put the title out to some creative thinking outfits and they came back with some ludicrous ones. 'Romeo, Juliet, Viola And Will' was one of them. They were just stupid.
Correct.

3 By what method did Anthony Hopkins believe that aliens were sending him messages in *Proof*?
I don't remember that one. [*Hears the answer*] That's an abstruse mathematics question!
The correct answer is in Dewey Decimal codes.

4 At the end of *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, Judi Dench's Evelyn says, "Someone once said, 'Everything will be alright in the end. And if it's not alright, then trust me, it's not yet the end.'" Who is that someone?
Sunny. [*Hears the answer*] You've *really* done some research. Technically, I was right within the framework of the movie. I wasn't even aware it came from a Shah Rukh Khan film.
Half a point. The correct answer is Shah Rukh Khan in *Om Shanti Om*.

5 In *Killshot*, what was the name of the corrupt cop played by Johnny Knoxville who got cut out of the movie?
You've stumped me there. Elmore Leonard's long-time researcher told me, "There is an elephant trap in every Leonard story and you'll discover where this one is." We had to reconfigure it quite substantially.
The correct answer is Ferris Britton.

6 You directed radio versions of the *Star Wars Trilogy* for NPR. Who played Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back*?
John Lithgow, a brilliant actor. We did *Star Wars* when *Return Of The Jedi* was still called *Revenge Of The Jedi*. We were right in the midst of it. It was the first time I'd made a radio play when the audience already had the images in their head.
Correct.

7 In *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, how does Captain Corelli (Nicolas Cage) respond when Captain Weber says, "*Heil* Hitler"?
"*Heil* Puccini!" I wasn't ready for the maelstrom of criticism when the film came out. I think the audience stubbed their toe on the idea of Nic Cage's casting but I'm still very proud of the film.
Correct.

8 What is the name of the fictitious town in *Ethan Frome*?
The location is popping into my mind. Oh, God...
The correct answer is Starkfield.

9 Who played Archie Brown in *Mrs Brown*?
Billy Connolly. No, no, no! The brother — Gerard Butler. It was virtually his first film.
Correct.

10 You have directed three actors to Academy Award nominations. Can you name them?
Judi Dench for *Mrs Brown*, and Gwyneth Paltrow and Geoffrey Rush for *Shakespeare In Love*. When Spielberg won Best Director, there was an assumption *Saving Private Ryan* would win. It was incredible when that didn't happen. There was an enormously long pause before Harrison Ford read out what was on the card. When I saw it again, it was not as long as I thought.
Correct.

JOHN MADDEN SCORES 6.5

"Six-and-a-half points out of ten? Gawd blimey, that quiz was really tough."

***MISS SLOANE* IS OUT ON DOWNLOAD ON 11 SEPTEMBER AND ON 18 SEPTEMBER ON DVD AND BLU-RAY**

ALAMY, REX FEATURES








THE FIRST-TAKE CLUB

Filling in those filmic blind spots, one person at a time

#16 NEIL GIBBONS ON AVENGERS ASSEMBLE

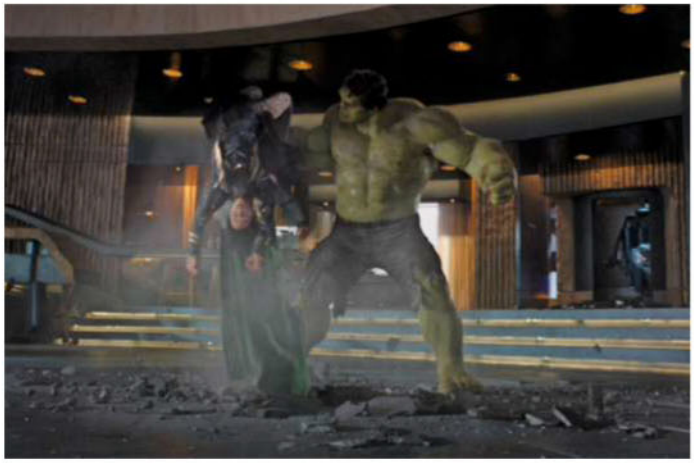
THIS MONTH'S FIRST-Take Club inductee is Neil Gibbons, screenwriter and the man who, along with his brother Rob, has breathed life into the second phase of Alan Partridge, across film (*Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa*), TV (*Mid-Morning Matters*), and the printed page (*Nomad*). He's been far too busy, presumably, to watch the film *Empire* readers voted the 16th greatest of all time in 2014, so we assembled *Avengers Assemble* for him. And...?

Avengers Assemble — known alternatively in my house as 'Avengers Congregate', 'Avengers Muster' or 'Avengers Coffee Morning' — isn't a film I've struggled to avoid.

I have a blanket rule to avoid any and all superhero movies. First, to spite my university flatmate Simon Bather, a man who adored comics even more than he loved pissing in the kitchen sink (ie, a lot), but who I've not seen or spoken to for 19 years. And second, because there are too many of them. Studios — like Partridge pitching Norfolk-set detective series 'Swallow' — argue that 'people like them, so let's make more of them'. But there's only so much budget to go round. Every dollar spent on another comic-book film is a dollar not spent on a new idea: a *Back To The Future*, a *Groundhog Day*. Buying a ticket to the latest *X-Men* sends a message to a film studio that says, "Don't finance something new, finance 'Thor 6' instead." Not for me.








But *Empire* readers have voted it the 16th best film ever made, it's well-reviewed, it has a cast of brilliant actors plus Tom Hiddleston. Who knows? Maybe I will enjoy this film.

I did not enjoy this film.

The avenging started about an hour in and made me wish I could watch more assembling — an hour of interminable, WWE fight sequences, with weirdly harm-free consequences. The combatants take it in turns to lamp each other, flinging opponents into a tree or bus or whatever, at which point they get up again, inconvenienced not by agonising back pain or a popped eye, but by having to walk 20 yards to return to the fray.

And that's my issue with it. The filter through which every creative decision was made seems to be, "Wouldn't it be cool if...?" It's painfully cool. Tony Stark has designed robotic arms to remove his Iron Man suit as he walks. Of course he has. Standing still is for losers!

The superheroes I can get on board with are the likes of Kick-Ass or The Greatest American Hero: skin-of-their-teeth, how-does-this-work-again reluctant chancers. But the Avengers are manicured, sharply dressed, have ripped torsos, wise cracks, steeled jaws. No-one is apprehensive or afraid or inept. Everyone is ept. I know, they have to be. They're superheroes. But their superness means nothing seems super to them. They're freaks who never freak out. Instead of screaming about what the holy Christ they're doing, they exchange snappy but professional barbs like a team on *The Apprentice* arguing about what name to choose.

Still, at least they knew what was happening. The film assumed a level of knowledge I did not, and still don't, have. I spent the first half-hour consulting Wikipedia every time a new character was introduced and still struggled to orientate myself. Is it sci-fi or fantasy? Science or magic?

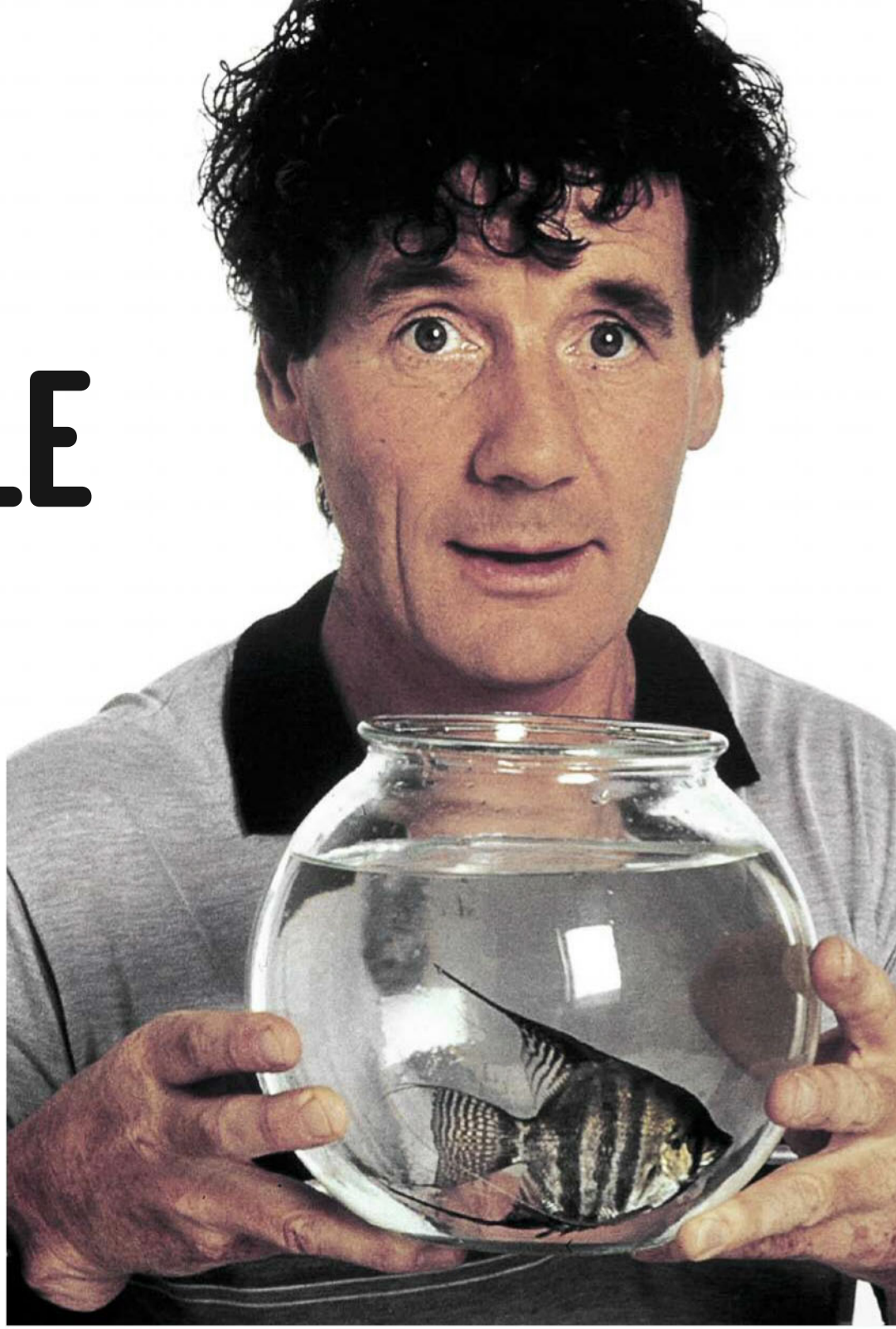
Maybe it's just me. Twelve-year-olds get it. *Eight*-years-olds get it. It's snappily written, well shot, with a great cast (plus Tom Hiddleston) but — and I'm braced for the inevitable *Empire* readers' fatwa here — it wasn't for me. Soz.

***AVENGERS ASSEMBLE* IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD**

TOP OF THE PILE

Star Michael Palin on *A Fish Called Wanda*'s unlikely hero, Ken Pile

WORDS **CHRIS HEWITT**



MICHAEL PALIN HAS two BAFTA awards on display in his office at his London home. Well, "slightly concealed", says the ever-bashful former Python. One marks an Academy Fellowship, awarded to him in 2013 for his TV work. The other is testament to perhaps his single greatest performance, as the stammering, lovelorn Ken Pile in John Cleese's classic comedy *A Fish Called Wanda*, for which Palin won Best Supporting Actor in 1989. "I'm not sure which one is the *Wanda* one," reveals Palin. "I think it's the one that needs polishing." With the movie about to turn 30, he told us how he approached playing the film's secret weapon.

THE BEGINNING

"John and I met up fairly regularly between other work," says Palin of *Wanda*'s writer/star, and fellow Python. The duo had just finished working together on *Monty Python's The Meaning Of Life* when Cleese casually mentioned he was writing a comedy (then called *A Goldfish Called Wanda*). "He was very interested in having a character who stammered," recalls Palin. "He knew my father had a stammer and John, with his penchant for research, felt he should talk to me about how a stammer might be played, so he could get it right. He said, 'I'm going to write this part and you're the obvious person to play it.'"

THE STAMMER

Palin's father, Edward, who died in 1977, was afflicted with a terrible stammer, but Palin gently dismisses a suggestion that he played Ken as some sort of tribute. "I don't think I did," he says. "I don't know if I would have taken on the part if my father had still been alive, to be honest. I've often thought about this, and I think it probably would have been a bit difficult for me." Palin took the role on one condition: that Ken's stammer, while often used for comedic effect, would not completely define the character. "There's a fierceness and a strength in Ken which makes him more than just the butt of jokes. I didn't want him to be that at all."

THE LOOK

Working closely with Hazel Pethig, who had been the Pythons' costume designer from the off, Palin developed Ken's distinctive look, from "slightly tight trousers which were a little too short" to a wondrous perm. "We did a few tests where I curled my hair," says Palin. "Every time, steam was rising from my head. My hair was burning! So I went to a hairdresser and he gave me this dreadful perm. I think it shocked John, but then it made him laugh." Palin's decision meant he had to sport the hairdo in real life throughout the film's eight-week shoot. "My marriage nearly broke up," he jokes. "I had to sit very far away from my wife on the other side of the bed."



Clockwise from left: Palin's petty thug Ken Pile is bowled over by his piscine passion; Puckering up for *that* kiss with con artist Wanda Gershwitz (Jamie Lee Curtis); Madness sets in as Ken attempts to kill OAP Eileen Coady; Wanda's boyfriend Otto (Kevin Kline) and his unique chip torture; Wanda, Ken and Otto are joined by barrister Archie Leach — *Wanda* writer John Cleese.







ALAMY, ALLSTAR, REX FEATURES

THE KISS

"A very pleasant form of acting," is how Palin describes the scene where Ken is kissed by Jamie Lee Curtis' Wanda, in his bestselling diaries, *Halfway To Hollywood*. "It was the single greatest kiss in my movie career, but there's not much competition!" he laughs. The scene was shot twice, once at the beginning of filming and again at the end as a reshoot, although Palin insists it had nothing to do with him. "I don't think I had that much influence!" The idea that the kiss unlocks Ken, who briefly loses his stammer in the aftermath, came from Curtis. "She's very sharp," says Palin of his co-star. "It was a very nice scene in which you realise that underneath it all, this man wants a bit of love."

THE INTERROGATION

Ken's signature scene sees him suffer at the hands of Otto (Kevin Kline), who tortures him for information ("It's a chip up the nose!"), while eating Ken's beloved pet fish. If it looks uncomfortable for Palin, tied to a chair throughout, that's because it was. "It was okay, I knew there was great comic potential," he says. "At one point Kevin shoves an apple in my mouth, which wasn't in the script. So I could barely breathe, but people screamed with laughter." The chips up the nose didn't help, either. "You try to put French fries up your nose and retain them for three hours. It can't be done." The proposed solutions — chips with rough edges, plenty of Vaseline — removed the skin from inside Palin's proboscis. In the end, "the only way I could do it was by enormous feats of nasal muscular retention." Don't ask where the ketchup went.

THE AFTERMATH

While Ken's stammer led to some criticism, it was largely accepted within the stammering community, and had an unexpected boon. "I became involved with a group of people who were trying to start up a place for therapy for stammering children," says Palin. That eventually became The Michael Palin Centre For Stammering Children, still based in Clerkenwell, London. "That was the very good side of it, where I felt I'd done my dad proud."

***A FISH CALLED WANDA* IS OUT ON 18 SEPTEMBER ON DVD AND BLU-RAY**

THE EMPIRE VERDICT

A FISH CALLED WANDA

★★★★★

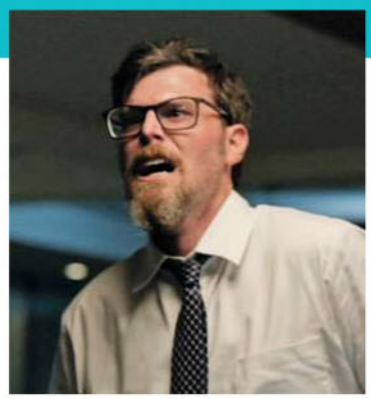
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MAN ON TRAIN

Saluting the scene stealers



THIS MONTH: ANGRY MAN, THE BELKO EXPERIMENT

"I COULD DIE tomorrow and be completely happy," smiles Joe Fria, "having been killed on screen by John C. McGinley." Well, as John Lennon once sang, whatever gets you through the night.

Fria is just one of the many to come to a sticky end in *The Belko Experiment*, James Gunn's horror-thriller where employees are locked into an office building and forced to kill each other. His might be the stickiest, hacked to death by McGinley's Wendell Dukes. "It was a wild day," he recalls. "I was covered in an immense amount of blood for 16 hours. When he attacked me, I wore a pad made of magazines. It was a real cleaver! The sensation was dulled, but I felt it."

The character was initially known as Angry Man, then Tyson Moon after a throwaway reference in the script that never got changed. But when Fria showed up on the film's Bogotá set, he was given a different name altogether. "Robert Hickman," he says. "I still have my little Belko nametag with that on it."

Fria has known Gunn since the '90s, popping up in *Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 2* as a Ravager. They bonded in unusual circumstances. "During a writer's strike, James was doing an online series, *PG Porn*. The idea was to pair up famous porn stars with known actors in scenes that depicted what happens before the sex. I had a blast, and that's how our working relationship began."

Fria has nothing but fond memories of the Colombian experience. "It was like summer camp," he says. "The stories of our drinking nights are legendary!" Save those for *The Belko Experiment 2*.

***THE BELKO EXPERIMENT* IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD**

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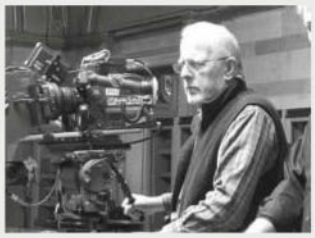


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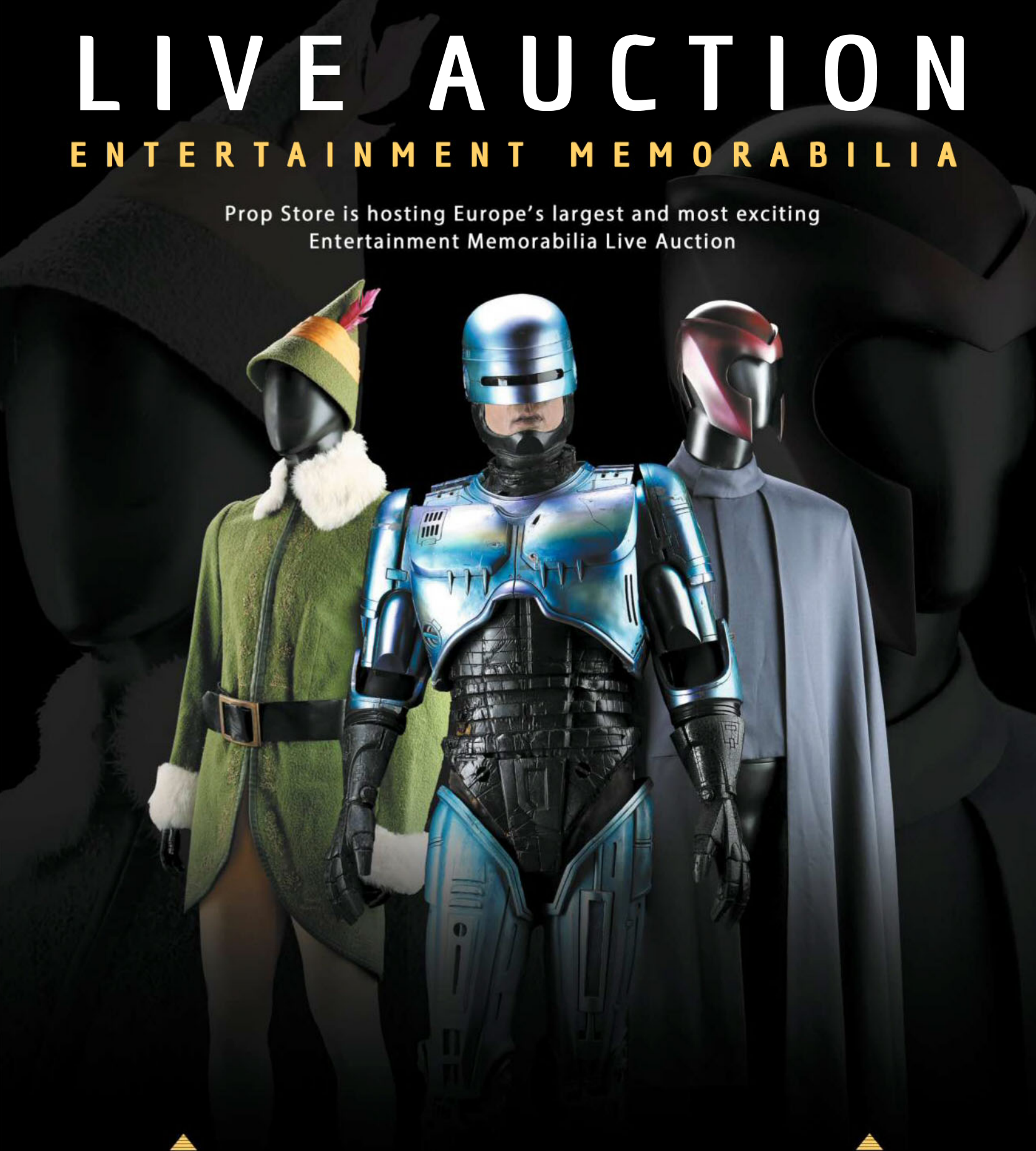
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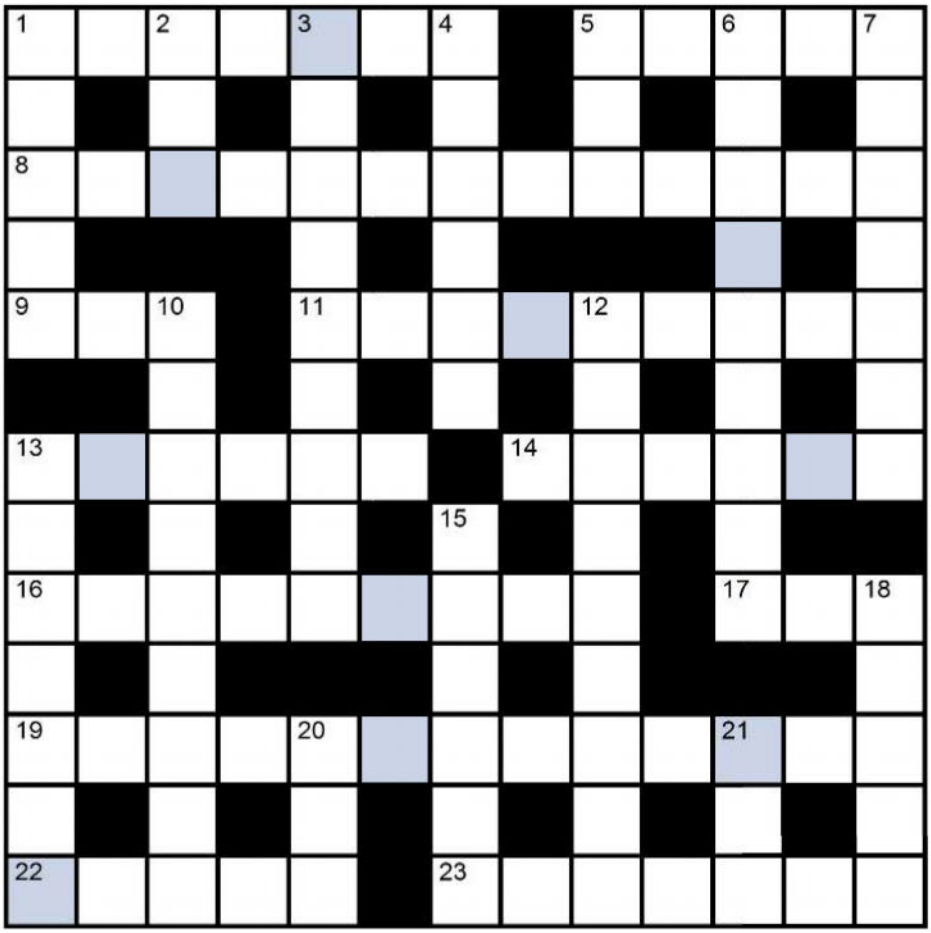
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1 This Ian was Winston in *John Wick* (7)
5 Luke, Rupert or Linda maybe? (5)
8 The — (Sean Connery's monastery mystery) (4,2,3,4)
9 In which Rooney Mara was controversially cast as Tiger Lily (3)
11 Hugh Jackman starred in this Netflix movie about anorexia (2,3,4)
13 Natalie Portman's First Lady portrayal (6)
14 Jennifer Aniston lent her skills to this animated big bird comedy (6)
16 Werner Herzog resurrected this iconic vampire in 1979 (9)
17 Film company once famous for its musicals (3)
19 Dismantled Algerian harem provides a film for Danny Glover and Forest Whitaker (1,4,2,6)
22 Jennifer —, Lorraine Bracco's character in *The Sopranos* (5)
23 Was this a peak in the careers of Josh Brolin and Jason Clarke? (7)

DOWN

1 Simon Pegg and Lake Bell's date movie (3,2)
2 Could be Neill, could be Worthington (3)
3 Richard Curtis claimed this could be his directoral swansong (5,4)
4 *The Fifth* — (Cumberbatch starrer) (6)
5 Jennifer Lopez played this title character while Viola Davis was Lila (3)
6 — *For The King* (Tom Hanks movie) (1,8)
7 Stella seen in *The Poseidon Adventure* etc (7)
10 He portrayed Tom Wilkinson and Sissy Spacek's son in *In The Bedroom* (4,5)
12 This HBO TV series became a film starring Adrian Grenier and friends in 2015 (9)
13 *Mad Men*'s Don Draper (3,4)
15 Patrick who was Sir Godfrey Tibbett in *A View To A Kill* (6)
18 David located amid a *Dogma-Metropolis* double bill. (5)
20 *The Book Of* — (Denzel Washington) (3)
21 The good untruth with Reese Witherspoon (3)

COMPETITION

WIN!

A 49" SMART HIGH DEFINITION TV



movies4men

THIS SEPTEMBER, MOVIES4MEN will be adding a range of classic titles to its library of war films and Westerns, including action-adventure *The Gunslingers*, the James Garner-starring *A Man Called Sledge* and Sergio Corbio's *The Great Silence*.

Movies4Men — which of course is perfectly suitable for women, too — specialises in classic cinema, and is adding more movies to its roster all the time. It's a great way to catch up with brilliant films that you may have missed.

To celebrate the new additions, we've got a 49" HDTV for one lucky winner to watch them on. If you fancy getting your hands on some hot new hardware, simply solve the crossword, crack the anagram and text your answer to the number below.

MOVIES4MEN IS AVAILABLE ON FREEVIEW 48, SKY 325, FREESAT 304 AND VIRGIN 426

COMPETITION ENDS 2 OCTOBER

HOW TO ENTER Take the letters from each coloured square and rearrange them to form the name of an actor, actress, director or character. Text 'EMPIRE' to 83070, followed by your answer, name and address (with a space between each element of your message!). Texts cost 50p plus standard operator costs. Lines close at midnight, 2 October. Winners are selected at random. See below for terms and conditions.

SEPTEMBER ANSWERS ACROSS: 1 Odds, **3** Hannibal, **9/15** The Last Knight, **10** Grand, **11** Romeo Must Die, **13** Ang Lee, **17** Teresa Palmer, **20** Croft, **21** Gattaca, **22** Talented, **23** Paws. **DOWN: 1** Outbreak, **2** Dream, **4** Arthur, **5** Night On Earth, **6** Blazing, **7** Ladd, **8** Taron Egerton, **12** Star Wars, **14** Grey Owl, **16** Maggie, **18** Moana, **19** Ice-T **ANAGRAM BRUCE BANNER**

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: One entry per person. Texts cost 50p + standard network rate. Ask the bill payer's permission before entering. Entries must be received before 3 October or will not be valid (but the cost of the text may still be charged). One winner will be selected at random. The model of the Blu-ray player may vary. Competition promoted by Bauer Consumer Media Limited t/a Empire ("Empire"). Empire's choice of winner is final and no correspondence will be entered into in this regard. The winner will be notified, by phone (on the number the text was sent), between seven and ten days after the competition ends. Empire will call the winner a maximum of three times and leave one message. If the winner does not answer the phone or respond to the message within 14 days of the competition's end, Empire will select another winner and the original winner will not win a prize. Entrants must be over 18, resident in the UK and not be employed by Empire. The prize is non-negotiable with no cash alternative. Empire is not responsible for late delivery or unsatisfactory quality of the prize. Entrants agree to the collection of their personal data in accordance with Empire's privacy policy: http://www.bauerdatapromise.co.uk/. Winner's personal details will be given to prize provider to arrange delivery of the prize. Bauer reserves the right to amend or cancel these terms or any aspect of the competition (including the prize) at any time if required for reasons beyond its control. Any questions, please email empire@bauermedia.co.uk. Complaints will not be considered if made more than 30 days after the competition ends. Winner's details available on request (after the competition ends) by emailing empire@bauermedia.co.uk. For full Ts&Cs see http://www.bauerlegal.co.uk/competition-terms.html.

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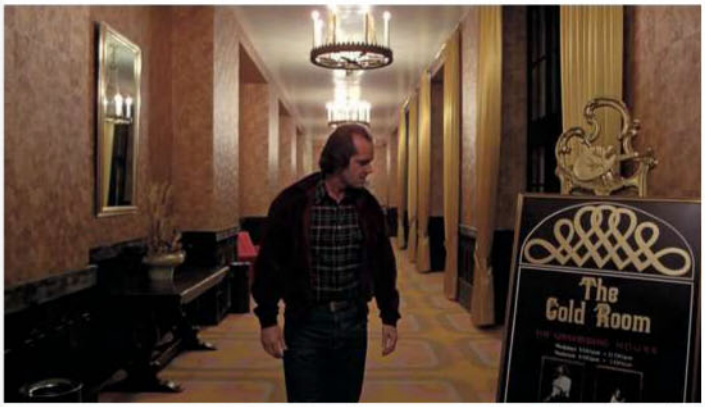
(YOU CAN EVEN WIN VIP TICKETS TO JOIN US ON THE NIGHT)*

Q MAGAZINE

*T&C'S APPLY

THE EMPIRE CLASSIC SCENE

THE SHINING CHOSEN BY ADAM WINGARD









Adam Wingard: "My favourite movie scene of all time is the bartender scene in *The Shining* with Jack Nicholson and Joe Turkel. I love the performances and the iconic-ness of the whole thing. If it comes on TV, I have to stop what I'm doing and watch it. I love the interactions between those two, but that scene in particular is about as good as movies get."

INT. OVERLOOK HOTEL

Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) is in a foul mood. He enters the deserted Gold Room, turns on the lights, goes up to the empty bar. Not a drink in sight.

JACK: God, I'd give anything for a drink. I'd give my goddamn soul for just a glass of beer.

He puts his heads in his hands. When he opens them again, what he sees makes him smile.

JACK: Hi, Lloyd. Little slow tonight, ain't it?

Jack laughs manically. We see why: a barman — Lloyd (Joe Turkel) — has suddenly appeared. What's more, the bar is now fully stocked.

LLOYD: Yes it is, Mr Torrance. [*He steps forward and puts his hands on the counter*] What'll it be?

JACK: I'm awfully glad you asked me that, Lloyd. Because I just happen to have two twenties and two tens right here in my wallet. I was afraid they were going to be there until next April. So here's what. You slip me a bottle of bourbon, a little glass, and some ice. You can do that, can't you, Lloyd? You're not too busy, are you?

LLOYD: No, sir. Not busy at all.

Lloyd turns to start making the drink.

JACK: Good man. You set 'em up and I'll knock 'em back, Lloyd, one by one. White man's burden, Lloyd my man, white man's burden.

He takes out his wallet. It's empty.

JACK: Say, Lloyd, it seems I'm temporarily light. How's my credit in this joint anyway?

LLOYD: Your credit's fine, Mr Torrance.

JACK: That's swell. I like ya, Lloyd. I always liked ya. You were always the best of 'em. Best goddamn bartender from Timbuktu to Portland, Maine. Or Portland, Oregon, for that matter.

LLOYD: Thank you for saying so.

JACK: Here's to five miserable months on the wagon, and all the irreparable harm that it's caused me.

He takes a drink. One gulp. Gone.

LLOYD: How are things going, Mr Torrance?

JACK: Things could be better, Lloyd. Things could be a whole lot better.

LLOYD: I hope it's nothing serious.

JACK: Nah. Nothing serious.

Lloyd pours him another drink.

JACK: Just a little problem with the old sperm bank upstairs. Nothing I can't handle, Lloyd. Thanks.

LLOYD: Women. Can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em.

JACK: Words of wisdom, Lloyd… Words. Of. Wisdom.

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